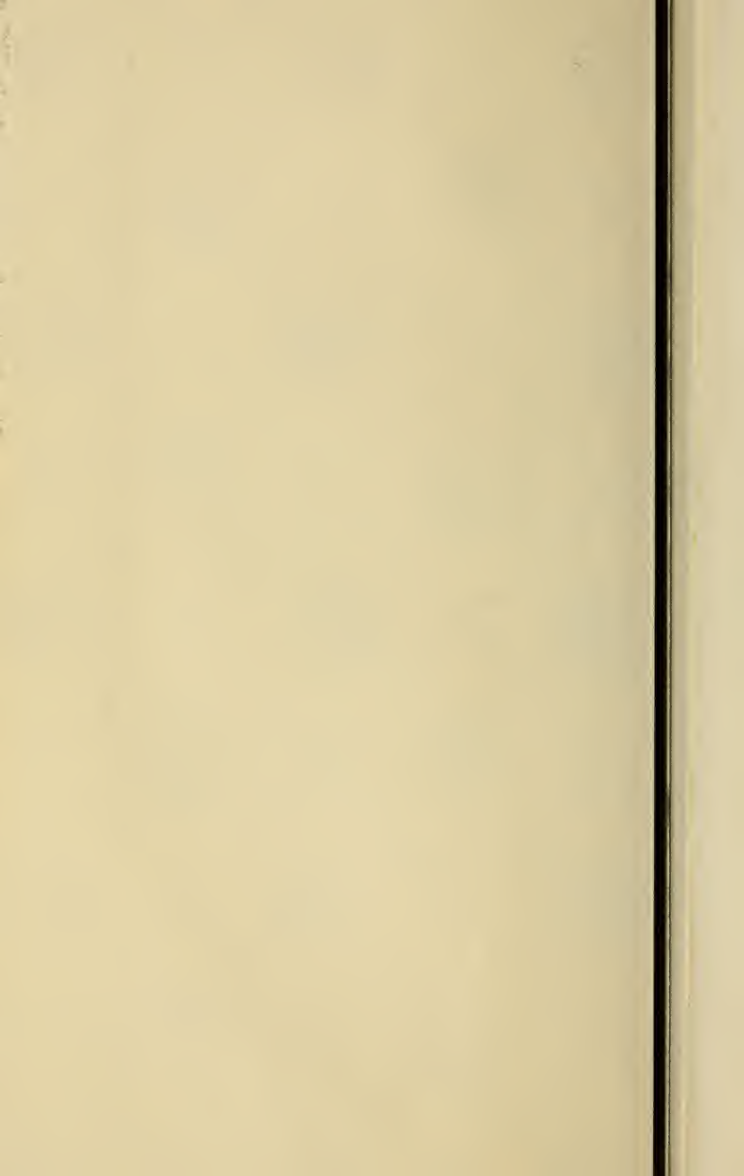










THE

FEAST OF THE POETS.

PRINTED BY S. HAMILTON,
WEYBRIDGE, SURREY.

THE
FEAST OF THE POETS,

WITH
OTHER PIECES IN VERSE,

BY
LEIGH HUNT.

Οιον δ' τῷ πολλωνος εσεισατο δαφνινος ὄρπηξ,
Οια δ' ὄρον το μελαθρον' εκας, εκας, οστις αλιτρος,
Και δη που τα θυρετρα καλω ποδι Φοιβος αρασσει.

CALLIMACHUS.

SECOND EDITION,
AMENDED AND ENLARGED.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR GALE AND FENNER,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1815.

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1815

DEDICATION.

TO THOMAS MITCHELL, ESQ.

LATE FELLOW OF SYDNEY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

MY DEAR MITCHELL,

ALLOW me to surprise you with a Dedication. It is not quite so disinterested a one as you may imagine, for it is a cheap way of paying my debts for many an hour of enjoyment in health, and refreshment in sickness; and besides, I wish to show that alarming body of people, called "*some persons*," that the most unaccommodating politician need not absolutely want friends, and warm ones,

DEDICATION.

even among those who have minds of their own. You and I differ upon more than one point of importance, public as well as private; but on the subject of poetry, with some little exception perhaps as to your old friend Ben Jonson, we are generally agreed; and no two persons can be more firmly persuaded, that there is but one thing happier than friendship, and nothing better than principle.

Yours most sincerely,

LEIGH HUNT.

January 10th, 1814.

PREFACE

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.



LIKE most of the poetical inventions of modern times, the idea of Apollo's holding sessions and elections is of Italian origin; but having been hitherto treated in its most ordinary light, with the degradation of the God into a mere critic or chairman, it has hitherto received none of those touches of painting, and combinations of the familiar and fanciful, of which it appears so provocative, and which the present trifle is an attempt to supply. The pieces it has already produced in our language, are the 'Sessions of the Poets' by Sir John Suckling, another 'Session' by an anonymous author in the first volume of 'State Poems,' the 'Trial for the Bays' by Lord Rochester, and the 'Election of a

Poet Laureat' by Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham. They are for the most part vulgar and poor; though Suckling and Rochester, it is evident, could have done much better had they pleased. But there is a strange affectation of slovenliness about the lower species of satire in those times, which appears to have been mistaken for a vigorous negligence or gallant undress.

The attempt above-mentioned has met with the approbation of the public; and the little poem, which is now brought to a second edition, would have made its reappearance earlier, but for a series of occupations and indispositions, which are at once the best and most unexplainable of excuses. The text has again been increased; and three poets added to the dining-table, whom the author could give no sufficient reason for not having seated before. One of them indeed he had already declared in the notes, to be, in his opinion, the first poet of the day; another, in the same place, he had mentioned as of kindred genius; and the third he had only omitted in the text, because it was originally written without him. If these are very bad explanations,

they are like many other bad things, very true ones ; and the Author can only hope, that the additions may be found entertaining enough to do away any very rigid inquiries as to their previous non-appearance.

As to the principal poet alluded to, the Author does not scruple to confess, that his admiration of him has become greater and greater between every publication of ‘ The Feast of the Poets.’ He has become a convert, not indeed to what he still considers as his faults, but, to use a favourite phrase of these times, to the “immense majority” of his beauties ;—and here, it seems to him, lies the great mistake, which certain intelligent critics persist in sharing with others of a very different description. It is to be observed, by the way, that the defects of Mr. Wordsworth are the result of theory, not incapacity ; and it is with their particular effect on those most calculated to understand him that we quarrel, rather than with any thing else. But taking him as a mere author to be criticised, the writers in question seem to regard him as a stringer of puerilities, who has so many faults that you can only wonder now

and then at his beauties; whereas the proper idea of him is that of a noble poet, who has so many beauties that you are only apt now and then, perhaps with no very great wisdom, to grow impatient at his faults.

July 11th, 1815.

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THE
FEAST OF THE POETS.

T'OTHER day, as Apollo sat pitching his darts
Through the clouds of November, by fits and by starts,
He began to consider how long it had been,
Since the bards of Old England had all been rung in.
'I think,' said the God, recollecting, (and then
He fell twiddling a sunbeam as I may my pen,)
'I think—let me see—yes, it is, I declare,
As long ago now as that Buckingham there: ¹
And yet I can't see why I've been so remiss,
Unless it may be—and it certainly is,
That since Dryden's fine verses, and Milton's sublime,
I have fairly been sick of their sing-song and rhyme.

There was Collins, 'tis true, had a good deal to say ;
But the rogue had no industry,—neither had Gray :
And Thomson, though best in his indolent fits,
Either slept himself weary, or bloated his wits.²
But ever since Pope spoil'd the ears of the town
With his cuckoo-song verses, half up and half down,
There has been such a doling and sameness,—by Jove,
I'd as soon have gone down to see Kemble in love.³
However, of late as they've rous'd them anew,
I'll e'en go and give them a lesson or two,
And as nothing's done there now-a-days without eating,
See what kind of set I can muster worth treating.'
So saying, the God bade his horses walk for'ard,
And leaving them, took a long dive to the nor'ard :
For Gordon's he made ; and as Gods who drop in do,
Came smack on his legs through the drawing-room window.

And here I could tell, if it was'nt for stopping,
How all the town shook as the godhead went pop in,
How bright look'd the poets, and brisk blew the airs,
And the laurels took flow'r in the gardens and squares ;—
But fancies like these, though I've stores to supply me,
I'd better keep back for a poem I've by me,

And merely observe that the girls look'd divine,
And the old folks in-doors exclaimed 'Bless us how fine!'

Apollo, arriv'd, had no sooner embodied
His essence ethereal, than quenching his godhead,
He chang'd his appearance—to—what shall I say?
To a young gallant soldier returning in May?
No—that's a resemblance too vapid and low:—
Let's see—to a finish'd young traveller?—No:
To a graceful young lord just stept out of his carriage?
Or handsome young poet, the day of his marriage?
No,—nobody's likeness will help me, I see,
To afford you a notion of what he could be,
Not though I collected one pattern victorious
Of all that was good, and accomplish'd, and glorious,
From deeds in the daylight, or books on the shelf,
And call'd up the shape of young Alfred himself.⁴

Imagine, however, if shape there must be,
A figure sublim'd above mortal degree,
His limbs the perfection of elegant strength,—
A fine flowing roundness inclining to length,—
A back dropping in,—an expansion of chest,
(For the God, you'll observe, like his statues was drest)

His throat like a pillar for smoothness and grace,
His curls in a cluster,—and then such a face,
As mark'd him at once the true offspring of Jove,
The brow all of wisdom, and lips all of love;
For though he was blooming, and oval of cheek,
And youth down his shoulders went smoothing and sleek,
Yet his look with the reach of past ages was wise,
And the soul of eternity thought through his eyes.

I would'nt say more, lest my climax should lose;—
Yet now I have mentioned those lamps of the Muse,
I can't but observe what a splendour they shed,
When a thought more than common came into his head:
Then they leap'd in their frankness, deliciously bright,
And shot round about them an arrowy light;
And if, as he shook back his hair in its cluster,
A curl fell athwart them and darken'd their lustre,
A sprinkle of gold through the duskiness came,
Like the sun through a tree, when he's setting in flame.

The God, then, no sooner had taken a chair,
And rung for the landlord to order the fare,
Than he heard a strange noise and a knock from without,—
And scraping and bowing, came in *such* a rout!

There was Arnold, and Reynolds, and Dibdin, and Cherry,
All grinning as who should say, 'Shan't we be merry?'
And Hook, who had come with an absolute tear up,
And sweet Billy Dimond, a patting his hair up.
The God, for an instant, sat fix'd as a stone,
Till recov'ring, he said in a good-natur'd tone,
'Oh, the waiters, I see ;—ah, it's all very well,—
Only one of you'll do just to answer the bell.'
But lord ! to see all the great dramatists' faces !
They look'd at each other, and made such grimaces !
Then turning about, left the room in vexation,
And Hook, they say, could'nt help mutt'ring 'Damnation !'
'Twas lucky for Colman he was'nt there too,
For his pranks would have certainly met with their due,
And Sheridan's also, that finished old tricker ;—
But one was in prison, and both were in liquor. ⁵

The God fell a laughing to see his mistake,
But stopp'd with a sigh for poor Comedy's sake ;
Then gave mine host orders, who bow'd to the floor,
And presented three cards that were brought to the door:
Apollo just gave them a glance with his eye,
'Spencer—Rogers—Montgom'ry,'—and putting them by,

Begg'd the landlord to give his respects to all three,
And say he'd be happy to see them to tea. ⁶

'Your Majesty, then,' said the Gaius, 'don't know
That a person nam'd Crabbe has been waiting below?
He has taken his chair in the kitchen, they say.'

'Indeed!' said Apollo, 'Oh pray let him stay:
He'll be much better pleased to be with 'em down stairs,
And will find ye all out with your cookings and cares:—
But mind that you treat him as well as you're able,
And let him have part of what goes from the table.'⁷

A soft, smiling voice then arose on the ear,
As if some one from court was about to appear:—
'Oh, this is the room, my good friend? Ah, I see it is;—
Room, sure enough, for the best-bred of deities!'
Then came a whisper,—and then was a hush,—
And then, with a sort of a look of a blush,
Came in Mr. Hayley, all polish'd confusion,
And said, '*Will* Apollo excuse this intrusion?
I might have kept back,—but I thought 'twould look odd,—
And friendship, you know,—pray how *is* my dear God?'
A smile, followed up by a shake of the head,
Cross'd the fine lip of Phœbus, who view'd him, and said,—

‘ I’ll give you a lesson, Sir, quite your own seeking,
 And one that you very much want—on plain speaking.
 Pray have you to learn,—and at this time of day,
 That your views on regard have been all the wrong way ?
 One ten thousandth part of the words and the time
 That you’ve wasted on praises instead of your rhyme,
 Might have gained you a title to this kind of freedom ;
 But volumes of endings, lugg’d in as you need ’em,
 Of *hearts* and *imparts*, where’s the soul that can read
 ’em ? ’s

So saying, his eye so alarmingly shone,
 That ere it could wink, the poor devil was gone.

A hem was then heard, consequential and snapping,
 And a sour little gentleman walk’d with a rap in.
 He bow’d, look’d about him, seem’d cold, and sat down,
 And said, ‘ I’m surprised that you’ll visit this town :—
 To be sure, there are one or two of us who know you,
 But as for the rest, they are all much below you.
 So stupid, in gen’ral, the natives are grown,
 They really prefer Scotch reviews to their own ;
 So that what with their taste, their reformers, and stuff,
 They have sicken’d myself and my friends long enough.’

‘ Yourself and your friends !’ cried the God in high glee ;
‘ And pray, my frank visitor, who may you be ?’
‘ Who be ?’ cried the other ; ‘ why really—this tone—
William Gifford’s a name, I think, pretty well known !’
‘ Oh—now I remember,’ said Phœbus ;—‘ ah true—
My thanks to that name are undoubtedly due :
The rod, that got rid of the Cruscas and Lauras,—
That plague of the butterflies,—sav’d me the horrors ;
The Juvenal too stops a gap in one’s shelf,
At least in what Dryden has not done himself ;
And there’s something, which even distaste must respect,
In the self-taught example, that conquer’d neglect.
But not to insist on the recommendations
Of modesty, wit, and a small stock of patience,
My visit just now is to poets alone,
And not to small critics, however well known.’
So saying he rang, to leave nothing in doubt,
And the sour little gentleman bless’d himself out.⁹

Next came Walter Scott with a fine weighty face,
For as soon as his visage was seen in the place,
The diners and barmaids all crowded to know him,
And thank him with smiles for that sweet pretty poem !

However, he scarcely had got through the door,
When he look'd adoration, and bow'd to the floor,
For his host was a God,—what a very great thing !
And what was still greater in *his* eyes,—a King ! ¹⁰
Apollo smil'd shrewdly, and bade him sit down
With ‘ Well, Mr. Scott, you have manag'd the town ;
Now pray, copy less,—have a little temerity,—
——Try if you can't also manage posterity.
——All you add now only lessens your credit ;
And how could you think too of taking to edite ?
A great deal's endur'd, where there's measure and rhyme ;
But prose such as your's is a pure waste of time,—
A singer of ballads unstrung by a cough,
Who fairly talks on, till his hearers walk off.
Be original, man ; study more, scribble less ;
Nor mistake present favour for lasting success ;
And remember, if laurels are what you would find,
The crown of all triumph is freedom of mind. ¹¹

‘ And here,’ cried Apollo, ‘ is one at the door,
Who shall prove what I say, or my art is no more.
Ah, Campbell, you're welcome:—well, how have you been,
Since the last time I saw you on Sydenham-green ?

I need not ask after the plans you've in view ;
'Twould be odd, I believe, if I had'nt them too :
But there's one thing I've always forgotten to mention,—
Your versification,—pray give it invention.
A fancy like yours, that can play its own part,
And clip with fine fingers the chords of the heart,
Should draw from itself the whole charm of its song,
Nor put up with notes, that to others belong.' ¹²

The poet to this was about to reply,
When Moore, coming in, caught the Deity's eye,
Who gave him his hand, and said, ' Show me a sight
That can give a divinity sounder delight,
Or that earth should more prize from its core to the poles,
Than the self-improv'd morals of elegant souls.
Repentant I speak it,—though when I was wild,
My friends should remember the world was a child,—
That customs were diff'rent, and young people's eyes
Had no better examples than those in the skies.
But soon as I learnt how to value these doings,
I never much valued your billings and cooings ;
They only make idle the best of my race ;
And since my poor Daphne turn'd tree in my face,

There are very few poets, whose caps or whose curls
Have obtained such a laurel by hunting the girls.
So it gives me, dear Tom, a delight beyond measure,
To find how you've mended your notions of pleasure ;
For never was poet, whose fanciful hours
Could bask in a richer abstraction of bowers,
With sounds and with spirits, of charm to detain
The wonder-eyed soul in their magic domain ;
And never should poet, so gifted and rare,
Pollute the bright Eden Jove gives to his care,
But love the fair Virtue, for whom it is given,
And keep the spot pure for the visits of heaven.' ¹³

He spoke with a warmth, but his accent was bland,
And the poet bow'd down with a blush to his hand,
When Byron relieved him by taking his place,
Which he did with so kind yet unconscious a face,
So ardent a frankness, yet modest an ease,
As much as to say " Now for me, if you please,"—
That Apollo took *his* hand, and earnestly said,
' Pray how came misanthropy into *your* head ?
I suspect (it is true), that in all which you tell us
Of robbers, and rakes, and such terrible fellows,

There's something mere scorn could have never devis'd,
And a sorrow-wise charity roughly disguis'd ;
But you must not be always indulging this tone ;
You owe some relief to our hearts and your own ;
For poets, earth's heav'n-linking spirits, were born,
What they can, to amend,—what they can't, to adorn ;
And you hide the best proof of your office and right,
If you make not as I do a contrast with night,
And help to shed round you a gladness and light. }
So remember ; and as to the style of your song,
And to strait-forward speaking, 'twill come before long :
But the fact is, that what with your courts and your
purses,

I've never done well with you lords who write verses :
I speak not of people like Sheffield or Lansdowne,
Whom some silly Body of Poetry hands down,—
But Rochester raked himself into his grave ;
A poor sceptred scoundrel slew Surrey the brave ;
And Sackville stopped short of his better ambition,
And lost a great name in the *shrewd* politician.
I wouldn't divorce, mind, the muse from the state ;
Great poets have been politicians as great ;

Let both be combined as becomes a true Briton,
And laurels add weight to the bench that you sit on ;
I love a free spirit ; its fancy is free ;
But so much the more you and I must agree.' ¹⁴

He smiled ; and his Lordship shook hands as before,
And was turning about to say something to Moore,
When all on a sudden, there rose on the stairs
A noise as of persons with singular airs ;
You'd have thought 'twas the Bishops or Judges a
coming,

Or whole court of Aldermen hawing and humming,
Or Abbot, at least, with his ushers before,
But 'twas only Bob Southey and two or three more. ¹⁵

Bob walk'd at the head with a tatter'd bay crown,
And look'd such a compound of courtier and clown,
Such a thing of pure nature that *should* have been true,
With such an assumption of tenfold his due,
That a jerk took the eye-brows of every one there
With a pleasant suspense 'twixt a smile and a stare ;
When lo, as poor Bob was collecting his wit,
The thing on his head, as if seiz'd with a fit,
Began crackling, and splitting, and writhing about,
And so in a flash and a vapour went out.

I waive all attempt to describe how he colour'd,
Winc'd, caper'd, and twirl'd, and cried 'What's this?'
and 'Oh Lord!'

With all his dilemmas, made worse by their chuckles,
'Twixt easing his temples, and burning his knuckles:
The circle, half-dying, scarce knew what to do,
With all their good breeding, and handkerchiefs too,
And Apollo, who laugh'd till the tears in his eyes
Had quench'd the dread sparkle that caused the surprise,
Said, 'Nay, don't be frightened;—there, help him a seat;
'His head's in no danger from that sort of heat.'

Then breathing his laugh off, the God rais'd his chest,
And look'd with a pain'd sort of pride at the rest;
For Coleridge had vex'd him long since, I suppose,
By his idling, and gabbling, and muddling in prose;¹⁶
And Wordsworth, one day, made his very hairs bristle,
By going and changing his harp for a whistle.¹⁷
The bards, for a moment, stood making a pause,
And look'd rather awkward, and lax round the jaws,
When one began spouting the cream of orations
In praise of bombarding one's friends and relations;¹⁸
And t'other some lines he had made on a straw,
Showing how he had found it, and what it was for,

And how, when 'twas balanc'd, it stood like a spell!—
And how, when 'twas balanc'd no longer, it fell!—
A wild thing of scorn he describ'd it to be,
But he said it was patient to heaven's decree:—
Then he gaz'd upon nothing, and looking forlorn,
Dropt a *natural* tear for *that wild thing of scorn*! ¹⁹
Apollo half laughed betwixt anger and mirth,
And cried, ' Was there ever such trifling on earth?
What! think ye a bard's a mere gossip, who tells
Of the ev'ry-day feelings of every one else,
And that poetry lies, not in something select,
But in gath'ring the refuse that others reject?
Must a ballad doled out by a spectacled nurse
About Two-Shoes or Thumb, be your model of verse;
And your writings, instead of sound fancy and style,
Look more like the morbid abstractions of bile?
There is one of you here, who, instead of these fits,
And becoming a joke to half-thinkers and wits,
Should have brought back our fine old pre-eminent way,
And been the first man at my table to day:
But resolv'd as I am to maintain the partitions
'Twixt wit and mere wildness, he knows the conditions;

And if he retains but a spark of my fire,
Will show it this instant,—and blush,—and retire.’
He spoke; and poor Wordsworth, his cheeks in a glow,
(For he felt the God in him) made symptoms to go,
When Apollo, in pity, to screen him from sight,
Threw round him a cloud that was purple and white,
The same that of old us’d to wrap his own shoulders,
When coming from heaven, he’d spare the beholders :
’Twas culled from the east, at the dawning of day,
In a bright show’ry season ’twixt April and May.
Yet the bard was no sooner obeying his king,
And gliding away like a shadow of spring,
Than the latter, who felt himself touch’d more and more
Tow’rds a writer whose faults were as one to five score,
And who found that he shouldn’t well know what to
say,

If he sent, after all, his best poet away,
Said, ‘ Come, my dear Will,—imperfections apart,—
Let us have a true taste of our exquisite art ;
You know very well you ’ve the key to my heart.’

At this the glad cloud, with a soft heaving motion,
Stopp’d short, like a sail in a nook of the ocean ;

And out of its bosom there trembled and came
A voice, that grew upwards, and gather'd like flame :
Of nature it told, and of simple delights
On days of green sunshine, and eye-lifting nights ;
Of summer-sweet isles and their noon-shaded bowers,
Of mountains, and valleys, trees, waters, and flowers,
Of hearts, young and happy, and all that they show
For the home that we came from and whither we go ;
Of wisdom in age by this feeling renew'd,
Of hopes that stand smiling o'er passions subdu'd,
Of the springs of sweet waters in evil that lie ;—
Of all, which, in short, meets the soul's better eye
When we go to meek nature our hearts to restore,
And bring down the Gods to walk with us once more.

You may think what effect was produced by this strain :
Apollo put on all his graces again,
With face just inclining, and smiles that agreed ;
And Scott look'd as who should say ' Lofty indeed !'
And Campbell, as if 'twould be stupid to doubt it ;
And Bob, as if he, forsooth, knew all about it ;
And Byron, as though he were wrapt in his place ;
And Moore, as if pleasure had burst on his face ;

And all cried at last, with a passion sublime,
' This, this is the Prince of the Bards of his Time !' ²⁰

So the cloud roll'd apart, and the poet came forth,
And took his proud seat as was due to his worth ;
And Apollo, who felt all his spirits restor'd,
And would'nt, for trifles, make gaps at his board,
Twitch'd Coleridge's ear, who stood yawning askew,
And said, ' There, you lazy dog, sit you down too.'

' And now,' said the God,—but he scarcely had spoken,
When bang went the door—you'd have thought it was
broken ;

And in rush'd a mob with a scuffle and squeeze,
Exclaiming, ' What ! Wordsworth, and fellows like these !'
' Nay then, we may all take our seats as we please !'
I can't, if I would, tell you who they all were ;
The names have escap'd me ; but Wharton was there,
Besides a whole host of pretenders and slaves,
And parsons turn'd bullies, and brief-begging knaves.
The God smiled at first with a turn tow'rds the fire,
And whisper'd ' There, tell 'em they'd better retire ;'
But lord ! this was only to set all their quills up ;
The rogues did but bustle ; and pulling their frills up,

Stood fixing their faces, and stirr'd not an inch ;
Nay, some took their snuff out, and join'd in a pinch.

Then wrath seiz'd Apollo ; and turning again,
' Ye rabble,' he cried, ' common-minded and vain,
Whate'er be the faults which true bards may commit,
(And most of 'em lie in your own want of wit,)
Ye shall try, wretched creatures, how well ye can bear
What such only witness, unsmote with despair.'

He said ; and the place all seem'd swelling with light,
While his locks and his visage grew awfully bright ;
And clouds, burning inward, roll'd round on each side,
To encircle his state, as he stood in his pride ;
Till at last the full Deity put on his rays,
And burst on the sight in the pomp of his blaze !
Then a glory beam'd round, as of fiery rods,
With the sound of deep organs and chorister gods ;
And the faces of bards, glowing fresh from their skies,
Came thronging about with intentness of eyes,—
And the Nine were all heard, as the harmony swell'd,—
And the spheres, pealing in, the long rapture upheld,—
And all things, above, and beneath, and around,
Seem'd a world of bright vision, set floating in sound.

That sight and that music might not be sustain'd
But by those who a hold on true feeling had gain'd;
And even the bards who had graciousness found,
After gazing awhile, bow'd them down to the ground.
What then could remain for that feeble-eyed crew?
Through the door in an instant they rush'd and they
flew,
They rush'd, and they dash'd, and they scrambled, and
stumbled,
And down the hall staircase distractedly tumbled,
And never once thought which was head or was feet,
And slid through the hall, and fell plump in the street.
So great was the panic that smote them to flight,
That of all who had come to be feasted that night,
Not one ventur'd back, or would stay near the place;
Even Croker declin'd, notwithstanding his face;
And old Peter Pindar turn'd pale, and suppress'd,
With a death-bed sensation, a blasphemous jest.²¹
But Phœbus no sooner had gain'd his good ends,
Than he put off his terrors, and rais'd up his friends,
Who stood for a moment, entranc'd to behold
The glories subside and the dim-rolling gold,

And listen'd to sounds, that with ecstasy burning
Seem'd dying far upward, like heaven returning.

Then 'Come,' cried the God in his elegant mirth,

'Let us make us a heav'n of our own upon earth,

And wake with the lips, that we dip in our bowls,

That divinest of music,—congenial souls.'

So saying, he led through the door in his state,

And seating the poets, cried 'Laurels for eight!'

No sooner demanded, than lo! they were there,

And each of the bards had a wreath in his hair.

Lord Byron's with turk's-cap and cypress was mix'd,

And Scott's with a thistle, with creeper betwixt;

And Wordsworth's with celandin, aloe, and pine;

And, Bob, penny-royal and blow-ball with thine;

Then Sam's with mandragoras, fearful to wear;

With willow Tom Campbell's, and oak here and there;

And lastly, with shamrock from tear-bedew'd shores,

And with vine-leaves and Jump-up-and-kiss-me, Tom

Moore's.²²

Then Apollo put his on, that sparkled with beams,

And rich rose the feast as an epicure's dreams,—

Not epicure civic, or grossly inclin'd,

But such as a poet might dream ere he din'd;

For the God had no sooner determin'd the fare,
That it turn'd to whatever was racy and rare :
The fish and the flesh, for example, were done,
On account of their fineness, in flame from the sun ;
The wines were all nectar of different smack,
To which Muskat was nothing, nor Virginis Lac,
No, nor Lachryma Christi, though clearly divine,
Nor Montepulciano, though King of all Wine.²³
Then as for the fruits, you might garden for ages,
Before you could raise me such apples and gages ;
And all on the table no sooner were spread,
Than their cheeks next the God blush'd a beautiful red.
'Twas magic, in short, and deliciousness all ;—
The very men-servants grew handsome and tall,
To velvet-hung ivory the furniture turn'd,
The service with opal and adamant burn'd,
Each candlestick chang'd to a pillar of gold,
While a bundle of beams took the place of the mould,
The decanters and glasses pure diamond became,
And the corkscrew ran solidly round into flame :—
In a word, so completely forestall'd were the wishes,
E'en harmony struck from the noise of the dishes.

It can't be suppos'd I should think of repeating
The fancies that flow'd at this laureat meeting ;
I haven't the brains, and besides, was not there ;
But the wit may be easily guess'd, by the chair :
Suffice it to say, it was keen as could be,
Though it soften'd to prettiness rather at tea.

I must mention, however, that during the wine,
The mem'ry of Shakspeare was toasted with nine ;
When lo, as each poet was lifting his cup,
A strain of invisible music struck up :—
'Twas a mixture of all the most exquisite sounds
To be heard upon earthly or fanciful grounds,
When poms or when passions their coming declare,
Or there's something at work in the moonshiny air ;
For the trumpet sprang out, with a fierce-flowing blast,
And the hautboys lamentingly mingled, and pass'd,
Till a smile-drawing sweetness stole in at the close
With the breathing of flutes and the smoothing of bows,
And Ariel was heard, singing thinly and soft,
Then with tricksy tenuity vanish'd aloft.
The next name was Chaucer,—and part of the strain
For the glorious old boy was play'd over again.

Then ‘Milton!’ they cried, with a solemn shout,
When bursting at once in its mightiness out,
The organ came gath’ring and rolling its thunder;
Yet wanted not intervals, calmer of wonder,
Nor stops of low sweetness, like winds when they fall,
Nor voices Elysian, that came with a call.
Last follow’d my Spenser, (I wish I’d been there!)
And the light-neighing trumpet leap’d freshly on air,
With preludes of flutes as to open a scene,
And pipes with coy snatches that started between,
Till sudden it stopp’d,—and you heard a dim strain,
Like the shell of old Triton far over the main.

’Twould be tedious to count all the names as they rose,
But none were omitted, you’ll eas’ly suppose,
Whom Fancy has crown’d with one twig of the bay,
From old Gawin Douglas to Shenstone and Gray.
I must’nt forget though, that Bob, like a gander,
Would give “a great genius,”—one Mr. Landor;²⁴
And Walter look’d up too, and begg’d to propose
A particular friend of his,—one Mr. Rose:²⁵
But the God look’d at Southey, and shrugging his shoulder,
Cried, ‘When, my good friend, will you try to grow older?’

Then nodding to Scott, he said, ‘Pray be as portly
And rich as you please, but a little less courtly.’
So, changing the subject, he call’d upon Moore,
Who sung such a song, that they shouted ‘Encore!’
And the God was so pleas’d with his taste and his tone,
He obey’d the next call, and gave one of his own,—
At which you’d have thought,—(’twas so witching a warble,)
The guests had all turn’d into listening marble;
The wreaths on their temples grew brighter of bloom,
As the breath of the Deity circled the room;
And the wine in the glasses went rippling in rounds,
As if follow’d and fann’d by the soft-winged sounds.

Thus chatting and singing they sat till eleven,
When Phœbus shook hands, and departed for heaven;
‘For poets,’ he said, ‘who would cherish their powers,
And hop’d to be deathless, must keep to good hours.’²⁶
So off he betook him the way that he came,
And shot up the north, like an arrow of flame;
For the Bear was his inn; and the comet, they say,
Was his tandem in waiting to fetch him away.

The others then parted, all highly delighted;
And so shall I be, when you find me invited.

NOTES

ON THE

FEAST OF THE POETS.

¹ *I think—let me see—yes, it is, I declare,
As long ago now as that Buckingham there.*

SHEFFIELD, Duke of Buckinghamshire, one of the licentious dabblers in wit, who were educated in the court of Charles the Second. It would have appeared a great piece of insolence to this flimsy personage, who in a posthumous edition of his works is recommended to the care of “Time, Truth, and Posterity,” to be told, that at the distance of a hundred years, it would be necessary to say who he was. His Grace, it is true, by favour of long standing, and of the carelessness or ignorance of compilers,

still keeps his place in those strange medleys of good and bad, called Collections of English Poets; but very few persons know any thing of him; and they who do, will hardly object to the tone of contempt with which Apollo speaks of a grave coxcomb, who affected to care nothing for the honours of either literature or the world, when he was evidently ambitious of both. In his Election of a Poet Laureat, where Pope, Prior, and others, are among the candidates, he thus modestly introduces himself:—

When Buckingham came, he scarce car'd to be seen,
Till Phœbus desir'd his old friend to walk in;
But a laureat peer had never been known,
The commoners claim'd that place as their own.

Yet if the kind God had been ne'er so inclin'd
To break an old rule, yet he well knew his mind,
Who of such preferment would only make sport,
And laugh'd at all suitors for places at court.

I may here, by the way, take notice of a strange piece of carelessness, which has escaped Mr. Walter Scott in his edition of Dryden, and which, unless he had made eighteen volumes of it, might be construed into an ignorance of his author;—at least, it does not exhibit to advantage his familiarity with the poets either of that age or the suc-

ceeding one. As an additional argument to prove, that Dryden had no hand in Buckingham's vulgar Essay on Satire, he asks in a note on that passage

To tell men freely of their foulest faults,
To laugh at their vain deeds and vainer thoughts,

“Would Dryden have pardoned such a rhyme?” It would appear so, for he used it repeatedly himself. Not to multiply instances, see the 2d part of the Conquest of Grenada, Act 2. Sc.1.—Act 3. Sc.1.—and Act 5. Sc. 2,—three times in one play. It was also used after him by Pope, Swift, and others, who affected to be conscientious rhymers; and in fact, there was nothing in it to startle them; for it appears by Johnson's Dictionary, that as late as fifty years back, the *l* in *fault* was not only dropt or retained at pleasure, but that “in conversation it was *generally* suppressed.” It is curious, that one of the authorities, in which this pronunciation is exemplified, should be another passage from Dryden.

*² And Thomson, though best in his indolent fits,
Either slept himself weary, or bloated his wits.*

In thinking it necessary to explain this passage, I only wish to deprecate all idea of disrespect to the memory of Thomson,—a man of a most cordial nature as well as of genius. The “bloated his wits” alludes to the redundant and tumid character of much of his principal poem, and the “slept himself weary” to his *Castle of Indolence*, which certainly falls off towards the conclusion, though it is exquisite for the most part, particularly in the outset. I would rather take my idea of Thomson as a poet from this little production than from all the rest of his works put together. There is more of invention in it,—more of unassisted fancy and abstract enjoyment; and in copying the simplicity together with the quaintnesses of a great poet, he became more natural, and really touched his subject with a more original freshness, than when he had his style to himself.

³ *But ever since Pope spoil'd the ears of the town
With his cuckoo-song verses, half up and half down, &c.*

The charge against Pope of a monotonous and cloying versification is not new; but his successors have found the style of too easy and accommodating a description to part with it; and readers in general, it must be confessed, have more than acquiesced in their want of ambition. The late Dr. Darwin, whose notion of poetical music, in common with that of Goldsmith and others, was of the school of Pope, though his taste was otherwise different, was perhaps the first who, by carrying it to its extreme pitch of sameness, and ringing it affectedly in one's ears, gave the public at large a suspicion that there was something wrong in its nature. But of those who saw its deficiencies, part had the ambition without the taste or attention requisite for striking into a better path, and became eccentric in another extreme; while others, who saw the folly of both, were content to keep the beaten track and set a proper example to neither. By these appeals, however, the public ear has been ex-

cited to expect something better ; and perhaps there never was a more favourable time than the present, for an attempt to bring back the real harmonies of the English heroic, and to restore to it half the true principle of its music,—variety.

I am not here joining the cry of those, who affect to consider Pope as no poet at all. He is, I confess, in my judgment, at a good distance from Dryden, and at an immeasurable one from such men as Spenser and Milton; but if the author of the Rape of the Lock, of Eloisa to Abelard, and of the Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady, is no poet, then are fancy and feeling no properties belonging to poetry. I am only considering his versification; and upon that point I do not hesitate to say, that I regard him, not only as no master of his art, but as a very indifferent practiser, and one whose reputation will grow less and less, in proportion as the lovers of poetry become intimate with his great predecessors, and with the principles of musical beauty in general. Johnson, it is true, objects to those who judge of Pope's versification "by principles rather than perception," treating the accusation against him as a cant, and suspecting that the ac-

users themselves “ would have less pleasure in his works, if he had tried to relieve attention by studied discords, and affected to break his lines and vary his pauses.” It is dangerous to hazard conclusions with regard to the opinions of others, upon matters of which our own senses have but imperfectly informed us. Johnson, by his own confession, had no ear ; and on this subject, as well as graver ones, might be inclined to resent opinions, which interfered with his self-love, or disturbed the preconceived notions upon which he had rested himself. Without dwelling therefore upon the praises which he has elsewhere bestowed upon these very varieties, and which we may reasonably suspect him of having pronounced upon the strength of the rule which he treats so contemptuously,* it ought to be recollected, that the principles of an art are nothing but the results of a general agreement, to which the finest perceptions have come respecting it ; and that the taste, which could be content to do without

* See particularly the life of Dryden, where he praises that excellent versifier for knowing how “ to vary his pauses and adjust his accents ;” and observes, that as “ the essence of verse is regularity,” so “ its ornament is *variety*.”

variety in music or painting, would be thought very unfurnished for criticism upon it, either on the score of principle or perception.

The truth is, that perception has had nothing to do with the matter. The public ear was lulled into a want of thought on the subject; the words *music* and *harmony* came to be tossed about with an utter forgetfulness of their meaning; and so contented and uninquisitive had every body become on this head, that even those who sat down for the express purpose of calling Mr. Pope's admirers to a proper and smaller sense of his merits as a poet, were nevertheless equally agreed, that as a versifier his pre-eminence was not to be touched.* It was the same

* See the Essay of Joseph Warton on his Genius and Writings. The Doctor seems to have had the same notions of poetic harmony as his brother Thomas, who thought that Milton, " notwithstanding his singular skill in music," had " a very bad ear," and of whose beau ideal in versification I may here give an amusing instance. In the third book of the *Faerie Queene*, Canto 1. St. 14., is the following passage:—

At length they came into a forest wyde,
Whose hideous horror and sad trembling sound
Full griesly seem'd:—therein they long did ryde,
Yet tract of living creature none they found,
Save beares, lyons, and buls, which romed them around.

indeed all over Europe. Voltaire, who agreeably to the genius of the French stage discovered Addison to be our greatest dramatic writer, could not fail also, agreeably to

This last verse, says Warton, "would be improved in its harmony by reading,

Save lyons, beares, and buls, &c.

as would the following also, Book 5. Canto 2. St. 30.

Yet was admired much of *fooles, women, and boys,*

if we were to read

Yet was admired much of women, fooles, and boys.

But these *corrections* are made by the critic, upon a supposition that his author must have infallibly written what was *best*." The reader will recollect, that these lines are in the course of a very long poem; yet so little had Warton's ear profited by his acquaintance with the Greek and Italian writers as well as those of his own country, that he had obtained no perception of what is musical beyond that of mere smoothness. Upon this note Mr. Upton very justly observes, as far as the pause is concerned, that "as nothing is so tiresome as verse in the same unvaried measure and cadence, so the best poets, as Homer and Virgil among the ancients, Spenser and Milton among the moderns, often vary, not only in the pause of the verse, but likewise in the accent of the word. Hence our poet does not write

Save lyons, beares, and buls,

but

Save beares, lyons, and buls.

The reader may observe several of like sort, where the accent is varied and cadence changed, lest the ear should be tired with one unvaried sameness of measure, like a ring of bells without any changes."

the spirit of French verse in general, to pronounce that Pope was the most harmonious of our poets:—the Italians repeated the story, most likely from that want of information, with which critics are too apt to be satisfied, when they speak of the literature of other nations;—and every where, in the writings of the last hundred years, we meet with nothing but the music and harmony of Pope,—in versifiers, in critics, in philosophers, in historians, in small men and great, in the Mallets, the Hayleys, the Masons, the Johnsons, the Wartons, Adam Smiths, and the Humes. The latter description of writers, and indeed most of those who do not particularly cultivate a taste for poetry, as well as persons of every kind who are engaged in the busier pursuits of society, will most likely, for a long time to come, adhere to their love of Pope's versification, from the very principle which it wants,—that of contrast;—they take up a poet for relaxation after their toils, are naturally guided to Pope by the tone of society which is mingled with his more poetical character, and finding their ear at its ease in common with the rest of their faculties, are content with the indolence it enjoys, and care not to enquire why it is satisfied. Besides, it is to be remembered, that the rhe-

toricians as well as reasoners of the last century have in general formed their taste upon that of the French.

If the attention, however, of more poetical readers is once roused to this point, they will find our author not merely deficient on the score of harmony, but to a degree apparently so obvious and at the same time so surprising, that they will be inclined to wonder how they could have endured so utter a want of variety, and will not be willing, in future, to listen to a poet of any pretensions, who shall come before them without a new stop or two to his lyre.—To come to particulars.—Let the reader take any dozen or twenty lines from Pope at a hazard, or if he pleases, from his best and most elaborate passages, and he will find that they have scarcely any other pauses than at the fourth or fifth syllable, and both with little variation of accent. Upon these the poet is eternally dropping his voice, line after line, sometimes upon only one of them for eight or ten lines together ; so that when Voltaire praised him for bringing down the harsh wranglings of the English trumpet to the soft tones of the flute,* he

* Dictionnaire Philosophique, Art. Pope.—The reader will allow me to deprecate any application of these remarks on versification to the Feast of

should have added, that he made a point of stopping every instant upon one or two particular notes. See, for instance, the first twenty lines of Windsor Forest, the two first paragraphs of Eloisa to Abelard, and that gorgeous misrepresentation of the exquisite moon-light picture in Homer. The last may as well be quoted :—

As when the moon—refulgent lamp of night,
O'er Heav'n's clear azure—spreads her sacred light,
When not a breath—disturbs the deep serene,
And not a cloud—o'ercasts the solemn scene;
Around her throne—the vivid planets roll,
And stars unnumber'd—gild the glowing pole;
O'er the dark trees—a yellower verdure shed,
And tip with silver—ev'ry mountain's head;—
Then shine the vales—the rocks in prospect rise,
A flood of glory—bursts from all the skies:
The conscious swains—rejoicing in the sight,
Eye the blue vault—and bless the useful light.

the Poets. The unambitious ballad-measure in which it is written, has not only had a particular time and tune annexed to it from time immemorial, so as to be led off like a kind of dance, but as the couplets are really made up of four lines thrown into two, may be allowed to appeal to its own laws. This however is a trifle not worth the settling. The chief merit which is expected in verses of this description is idiomatical easiness.

Yet this is variety to the celebrated picture of Belinda in the Rape of the Lock :—

Not with more glories—in th' ethereal plain
The sun first rises—o'er the purpled main,
Than issuing forth—the rival of his beams,
Launch'd on the bosom—of the silver Thames.
Fair nymphs and well-dress'd youths—around her shone,
But ev'ry eye—was fix'd on her alone.
On her white breast—a sparkling cross she wore
Which Jews might kiss—and infidels adore.
Her lively looks—a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes—and as unfix'd as those :
Favours to none—to all she smiles extends ;
Oft she rejects—but never once offends.
Bright as the sun—her eyes the gazers strike,
And like the sun—they shine on all alike.
Yet graceful ease—and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults—if belles had faults to hide :
If to her share—some female errors fall,
Look on her face—and you'll forget them all.

This is a very brilliant description of a drawing-room heroine ; but what are the merits of its versification, which are not possessed by even Sternhold and Hopkins ? Out of eighteen lines, we have no less than *thirteen* in *succession* which pause at the fourth syllable,—to say nothing of the four *ies* and the six *os* which fall together in the

rhymes; and the accent in all is so unskilfully managed, or rather so evidently and totally forgotten, that the ear has an additional monotony humming about it,—

Quick as her eyes,
Fàvours to none,
'Oft she rejects,
Bright as the sun.

It does not follow that the critic who objects to this kind of sing-song, should be an advocate for other extremes and for the *affected* varieties of which Johnson speaks. Let the varieties, like all the other beauties of a poet, be perfectly unaffected: but passion and fancy naturally speak a various language; it is monotony and uniformity alone that are out of nature. When Pope, in one of his happy couplets, ridiculed the old fashion of gardening, he forgot that on principles common to all the arts, he was passing a satire on himself and his versification; for who can deny, that in the walks of his Muse

Grove nods at grove—each alley has its brother,
And half the platform—just reflects the other?

As the present notes are written for the poem to which they belong, not the poem for the notes, it is high time

to finish the one before me ; otherwise I was much tempted to conclude it with some counter examples of real poetic harmony from the verses of Dryden, Spenser, and Milton ; not that the style of any great writer is to be imitated at a venture, or to be studied with any direct view to imitation at all ; but because in the *best* effusions of those writers are to be found the happiest specimens of English versification, and such as with due regard to every man's own mode of thinking and speaking, might lead the poets of the present age to that proper mixture of sweetness and strength,—of modern finish and ancient variety,—from which Pope and his rhyming facilities have so long withheld us.

*4 Not though I collected one pattern victorious
Of all that was good, and accomplish'd, and glorious,
From deeds in the daylight, and books on the shelf,
And call'd up the shape of young Alfred himself.*

A note upon Alfred might be indulged me, on the strength of his having been reckoned the “ Prince of the

Saxon Poets ;” but the name of that truly great man is not to be mentioned without enthusiasm by any constitutional Englishman,—that is to say, by any Englishman, who truckling to no sort of licentiousness, either of prince or people, would see the manliest freedom of a republic, adorned by the graces and quickened by the unity of a monarchy.—But to whom indeed, that has an admiration for any great or good quality, is not the memory of Alfred a dear one ?—a man, beloved in his home, feared by his enemies, venerated by his friends,—accomplished in a day of barbarism,—anticipating the wisdom of ages,—self-taught, and what is more, self-corrected,—a *Prince* too, who subdued the love of pleasure,—a Monarch, who with power to enslave, delighted to make free,—a Conqueror, who could stop short of the love of conquest, and sheath his sword the moment it had done enough,—a Sage, in short, who during the greatest part of a reign, in which he had practised every art of peace as well as war, of leisure as well as activity,—in which he had fought upwards of fifty pitched battles, had cleared his country from its invaders, and had established the foundation of those liberties, upon which we are at this

moment enjoying our every-day comforts, had to struggle with a melancholy and agonizing disorder, which neither soured his temper nor interrupted his industry. If this is a character to make emulation despair, it is a character also to make despair itself patient, and to convert it into an invincible spirit.

It is not generally known to the admirers of Alfred, that there is a life of him extant, written in Latin by one of his most familiar and intelligent friends, Asser of Saint David's, whom he had invited to court from a monastery. There is a good edition of it, and I believe, not a scarce one, by Francis Wise, who was Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, and Assistant Librarian of the Bodleian*. The life is the more interesting, not only as it furnishes an authentic document for some of the most curious particulars, which our known historians have made popular, and for more which have been related by others, but inasmuch as the author exhibits evident marks of his being a plain-spoken, impartial man, and with all his venera-

* The one I have is an octavo, printed at Oxford in 1722, but the first edition appears to have been in quarto. Asser was edited also by Camden and by Archbishop Parker.

tion for Alfred, does not scruple to speak of the faults of his youth, and even to attribute his misfortunes to such causes as were likely to strike a churchman in that age. The substance of Asser is contained in the fourth and fifth books of Mr. Turner's History of the Anglo-Saxons, where the reader will find a more copious and interesting account of Alfred, though written in a singular style, than in any other English performance.

It is still however a disgrace to English biography, that there is no life of our unrivalled countryman, important enough from the size and the composition to do him justice. The notices of Milton, Hume, and Burke, who like all other wise men, of all opinions and countries, have united to speak of him with one voice, are mere notices, however excellent of their kind. Little perhaps could be added to the facts of his story; but they are of a nature to be rendered doubly interesting by proper management; no subject, it is evident, could be more justly provocative of elegant reflection and illustration; and a compact, lively volume, written by one who was learned enough to enter into the language of his hero, of taste enough to relish his accomplishments, and of

knowledge and spirit enough to apprehend the real greatness of his character, would be a treasure to be laid up in the heart of every Englishman, and tend to perpetuate those solid parts of our character, which are the only real preservatives of our glory.

*5 'Twas lucky for Colman he was'nt there too,
For his pranks would have certainly met with their due,
And Sheridan's also, that finished old tricker ;—
But one was in prison, and both were in liquor.*

It cannot be supposed, especially after my late situation, that I should object to a man on the mere ground of his being circumscribed in his movements; but it is pretty well known, I believe, that it is not plain-dealing which sent Mr. Colman to prison, nor any very great care for his honour which keeps him there. These are matters, however, upon which I am loth to touch, and therefore dismiss them.—The pertinacious ribaldry of Mr. Colman, and his affectation of regarding its reprovers as hypocrites,—things which look more like the robust igno-

rance of a vulgar young rake, than the proceeding of even an old man of the world who is approaching his grave,—have met with their just reprobation from every reader of common sense. The truth is, that Mr. Colman the *Younger*, as he calls himself, has been prodigiously overrated in his time, partly perhaps from his real superiority to the Dibdins and Reynoldses as a writer of huge farces, and partly from the applauses of a set of interested actors and gratuitous playwrights, whom he has helped to spoil in return; so that it really seems to be half vanity as well as sottishness, that persuades him he has a right to talk as he pleases, and to make us acquainted with this obscene dotage of his over his cups.

On Mr. Sheridan I spare myself additional comment, especially after the climax with which he finished his moral, when explanations were going to and fro respecting the Regent's cabinet. Apollo's rebuke of him, had he made his appearance, would have been on the old score of his neglect of the drama. As a comic writer, he has certainly, for a long time past, been our only connexion with a better race,—for there was an ideal sickness about Mr. Cumberland,—a hankering after petty

effects and smooth-speaking sympathies,—an inaptitude, in short, to fall in with the real forms and spirits of life, which made him look rather like a sickly foreigner who had got among us, than one of the native stock. The best part about him was his elegant scholarship. But may I say, that Mr. Sheridan, upon the whole, appears to me to have been overrated as an observer, and that the best part of him is his elegance also? an informed elegance no doubt, and one that is full of a social and sprightly humour,—but still a business of words rather than thoughts,—an elegance informing us little in its turn, and quite on the tasteful side instead of the inventive.

*6 Apollo just gave them a glance with his eye,
' Spencer—Rogers—Montgomery,'—and putting them by,
Begg'd the landlord to give his respects to all three,
And say he'd be happy to see them to tea.*

These writers, though classed together, and equally denied admittance to Apollo's dinner-table, either from

ineligibility to his greater honours or inability to sustain the strength of his wine, are, it must be confessed, of very unequal merits. Mr. Montgomery is perhaps the most poetical of the three, Mr. Rogers the best informed, and Mr. Spencer the soonest pleased with himself. The first seems to write with his feelings about him, the second with his books, the third with his recollections of yesterday and his cards of invitation. The most visible defect of Mr. Montgomery, who appears to be an amiable man, is a sickliness of fancy, which throws an air of feebleness and lassitude on all that he says;—the fault of Mr. Rogers is direct imitation of not the best models, written in a style at once vague and elaborate. His *Pleasures of Memory*,—a poem, at best, in imitation of Goldsmith,—is written in the worst and most monotonous taste of modern versification,—to say nothing of the never-failing *souls* and *controuls*, *thoughts* and *fraughts*, *tablets*, *tracings*, *impartings*, and all the endless common-places of magazine rhyming. Mr. Rogers, of late years, seems to have become aware of the defects of his versification, and attempted the other day to give his harp a higher and more various strain in the fragment upon

Columbus;—but the strings appear to have been in danger of snapping. It was ludicrous enough however, and affords a singular instance of the habitual ignorance of versification in general, to find the Quarterly Review objecting to a line in this fragment, for running a syllable out of its measure and attempting to snatch one of the finest graces of our older poetry.

The best thing in Mr. Rogers's productions appears to me to be his Epistle to a Friend, describing a house and its ornaments. It has a good deal of elegant luxury about it, and seems to have been the best written because the most felt. Here he was describing from his own taste and experience, and not affecting a something which he had found in the writers before him.

*7 But mind that you treat him as well as you're able,
And let him have part of what goes from the table.*

Mr. Crabbe is unquestionably a man of genius, possessing imagination, observation, originality: he has even powers of the pathetic and the terrible, but with all these

fine elements of poetry, is singularly deficient in taste, his familiarity continually bordering on the vulgar, and his seriousness on the morbid and the shocking. His versification, where the force of his thoughts does not compel you to forget it, is a strange kind of bustle between the lameness of Cowper and the slipshod vigour of Churchill, though I am afraid it has more of the former than the latter. When he would strike out a line particularly grand or melodious, he has evidently no other notion of one than what Pope or Darwin has given him. Yet even in his versification, he has contrived, by the colloquial turn of his language and his primitive mention of persons by their christian as well as surname, to have an air of his own; and indeed there is not a greater mannerist in the whole circle of poetry, either in a good or bad sense. His main talent, both in character and description, lies in strong and homely pieces of detail, which he brings before you as clearly and to the life as in a camera obscura, and in which he has been improperly compared to the Dutch painters, for in addition to their finish and identification, he fills the very commonest of his scenes with sentiment and an interest.

*8 One ten thousandth part of the words and the time,
 That you've wasted on praises instead of your rhyme,
 Might have gain'd you a title to this kind of freedom,—
 But volumes of endings, lugg'd in as you need 'em,
 Of hearts and imparts,—where's the soul that can
 read 'em?*

There is something not inelegant or unfanciful in the conduct of Mr. Hayley's *Triumphs of Temper*, and the moral is of that useful and desirable description, which from its domestic familiarity is too apt to be overlooked, or to be thought incapable of embellishment:—but in this as well as in all his other writings, there is so much talking by rote, so many gratuitous metaphors, so many epithets to fill up and rhymes to fit in, and such a mawkish languor of versification, with every now and then a ridiculous hurrying for a line or so, that nothing can be more palling or tiresome. The worst part of Mr. Hayley is that smooth-tongued and overwrought complimentary style, in addressing and speaking of others, which, whether in con-

versation or writing, has always the ill-fortune, to say the least of it, of being suspected as to sincerity. His best part, as has been justly observed, is his Annotation. The notes to his poems are amusing and full of a graceful scholarship; and two things must be remembered to his honour,—first, that although he had not genius enough to revive the taste in his poetry, he has been the quickest of our late writers to point out the great superiority of the Italian school over the French; and second, that he has been among the first, and the most ardent of them all, in hailing the dawn of our native painting. Indeed, with the singular exception of Milton, who had visited Italy, and who was such a painter himself, it is to be remembered to the honour of all our poets, great and small, that they have shown a just anxiety for the appearance of the sister art,

And felt a brother's longing to embrace
At the least glimpse of her resplendent face.

It would appear, from some specimens in his notes, that Mr. Hayley would have cut a more advantageous figure as a translator than as an original poet. I do not say he would have been equal to great works; for a translator, to

keep any thing like a pace with his original, should have at least a portion of his original spirit ; but as Mr. Hayley is not destitute of the poet, the thoughts of another might have invigorated him ; and he would at any rate have been superior to those mere rhymers,—such men as Hoole, for instance,—who, without the smallest pretensions to poetry in their own persons, think themselves qualified to translate epics. In the notes to his *Essays on Epic Poetry*, there is a pleasing analysis, with occasional versions of twenty or thirty lines, of the *Araucana* of Alonzo d'Ercilla, and in the same place is a translation of the three first Cantos of Dante, which, if far beneath the majestic simplicity of the original, is at least, for spirit as well as closeness, infinitely superior to such mouthing nonentities as the version of Mr. Boyd. But Dante, to say nothing of his demands upon a variety of powers, in consequence of those varieties of his own, in which after shaking us with his terrors, or shocking us with his resentments and his diabolisms, he will enchant us with his grace, melt us with his tenderness, or refresh us with some exquisite picture of nature, is like all the other poets of the first class, scarcely translatable but

by a kindred genius. The natural language they speak sets at nought the cant habit of books. You might as well endeavour, by the help of a fan, to gather round you the morning freshness of nature, as think of apprehending one of the great spirits of poetry, by means of these toyers in versification. Even the real poets among us have not done justice to those whom they translated, with the exception of some smaller pieces of lyric: Dryden wants the gracefulness and the selectness of Virgil, Chapman all the music of Homer, and Pope all the nature:—what then are we to expect from such a writer as Francis, or from that prince of involuntary crambo, Hoole? No wonder that men of good sense and taste, who happen not to be scholars, have found Horace a dull fellow and Ariosto a dotard.

The best translation, upon the whole, that has been produced in our language, both for closeness to the sense and sympathy with the spirit of its original, appears to me to be Fairfax's Tasso. I do not say that it is a perfect one, or that it is not sometimes straitened for want of room, and sometimes clouded with the obscurities of its age; but Fairfax seems to go along with his author, and to be more of a piece with him, than any translator per-

haps that has yet appeared. The versification is singularly free for its closeness, and has always been accounted one of the earliest harmonizers of our poetry: Dryden calls him on this account the father of Waller, who indeed was not slow to confess the relationship; and Fairfax, in renewing his claims upon our attention, may boast that he has been praised by Collins, and imitated by Milton.

The flowing versification of Fairfax has even drawn some writers into a love of him, who in other respects were not very seducible by the higher species of poetry. Among these is Hume, who compared a thing called Wilkie's *Epigoniad* to Virgil, and who was much inclined, in compliment to the rest of his French taste in literature, to call Shakspeare a barbarian.* Hume however is wrong when he says that "each line" in Tasso "is faithfully rendered by a correspondent line in the translation." The faithfulness, it is true, is for the most part as surprising as he represents it, and the number of lines is the same in both poems; but Fairfax has occasionally substituted a line of his own for the sense of the original, sometimes, as

* See the Appendix to the reign of James the First.

may be supposed, with no good to his author, yet sometimes even with improvement, and the line has always something poetical in it, though its taste may not be the true one. In the third book for instance, stanza 21st, where Tancred unknowingly encounters Clorinda, and knocks off her helmet, Fairfax says

About her shoulders shone her golden locks,
Like sunny beams on alabaster rocks.

This is a splendid image ; but Tasso merely says, with a more natural and momentary touch, that her golden locks were shaken out in the wind, and a young female appeared before him :—

E le chiome dorate al vento sparse,
Giovane donna in mezzo 'l campo apparse.

The conclusion of the succeeding stanza has also a turn with it unlike the original, and not in so allowable a taste, though its faultiness is Italian. But in other instances Fairfax can contend with his author, even at his best ; as in that close of the 14th stanza, canto 1st, describing the descent of the angel Gabriel, who is represented by Tasso as first dropping his flight upon Lebanon, and balancing

himself, as he lights, on *equalized* wings—su l' adeguate penne—

Pria sul Libano monte ei si ritenne,
E si libró su l' adeguate penne.

This elegant imitation of Virgil, Fairfax improved into a thought as new as it was beautiful,—

On Lebanon at first his foot he set,
And shook his wings with rory may-dews wet.

Milton, passing over the original in this passage, copies the translator, and that nothing may be lost, adds attitude to the motion from Virgil, and turns the dew into fragrance from Sannazarius :

Like Maia's son he stood,
And shook his plumes, that heav'nly fragrance fill'd
The circuit wide.

Book 5.

But I am getting unawares into a luxurious gossiping, quite out of my subject. The chief purpose for which I mentioned Fairfax was to suggest a republication of him in preference to the common-place dulness of Hoole, who would assuredly have never been tolerated, had not the last age of poetry, in which he lived, been given up to the lees of the French taste. The love of Italian literature

which began to revive among a few scholars of that age, is beginning to have its effect upon this ; and if it continue, will do a great deal of good both to our fancy and versification,—I mean, will put them both in a right way of exercising their faculties, and help them to think and speak for themselves ; for there is no danger that we shall fall into those errors of the Italian school, which however they may have been exaggerated by superficial observers, certainly do exist, and which are the natural overgrowth of fancy at certain periods of its flourishing. Our long habits of criticism will save us from those.

It is to be observed, after all, in speaking of schools of poetry, that they are only to be recommended comparatively. We are much more likely to get at a real poetical taste through the Italian than through the French school,—through Spenser, Milton, and Ariosto, than Pope, Boileau, and their followers ; the former will teach us to vary our music and to address ourselves more directly to nature ; but nature herself is, of course, the great and perfecting mistress, without whom we become either eccentric pretenders, or dangles after inferior beauty, or repeaters, at best, of her language at second hand. We

must study where Shakspeare studied,—in the fields, in the heavens,—in the heart and fortunes of man ;—and he, and the other great poets, should be our reading out of school-hours.

*9 So saying, he rang, to leave nothing in doubt,
And the sour little gentleman bless'd himself out.*

Mr. Gifford is a man of strong natural sense, with such acquired talents, as are apt to impress us with double respect, when their history is connected with early difficulties and an humble origin. The manner in which he has related those difficulties, in the interesting little memoir prefixed to his Juvenal, is calculated to give his readers a regard for him as well as respect ; and upon the whole, there is no living author perhaps, who might have enjoyed a more unmingled reputation, of the middle species, than Mr. Gifford. But a vile, peevish temper, the more inexcusable in its indulgence, because he appears to have had early warning of its effects, breaks out in every page of his criticism, and only renders his affected grin-

ning the more unpleasant. There is no generosity in his satire:—the merest folly he treats not only with ridicule but resentment; and even a mistake, upon a point which he understands better than some unlucky commentator, is something upon which he thinks himself entitled to be indignant and retributive. I pass over the nauseous Epistle to Peter Pindar, and even the notes to his Baviad and Mœviad, where though less vulgar in his language, he has a great deal of the pert cant and snip-snap which he deprecates, and wastes a ludicrous quantity of triumph over every poor creature that comes athwart him; but he cannot repress this spirit even upon better men, as may be seen where he differs with his brother commentators on Juvenal; and every decent mind, I believe, has been disgusted with his tiresome, peevish, and useless insults over his precursors in the explanation of Massinger. Had Mr. Gifford, for his own mistakes only, been treated with the roughness which he has shown towards others, he would have had enough to bear; but to visit on him the full return of his temper, would be a severity, as humiliating to a proper satirist, as intolerable to himself.

Our author however does not appear to have carried

this enthusiastic impatience of his against *all* the circles of life, with which his talents have successfully made him acquainted. Like his remorseless but at the same time discriminating brother critics, the Suppressors of Vice, his indignation appears to have made a seasonable stop in approaching the higher orders ; and thus from a wrathful, personal satirist of vice and folly, he has softened and settled himself into an editor of old dramatists and of government reviews, who is only wrathful in speaking of the objectors to princely vices, and only personal upon dead men or respectable ladies. Let a man have made a mistake upon an old poet fifty years back, and he shall be properly denounced ; let Mrs. Barbauld, to whom the rising generation are so much indebted, publish but a poetical opinion in verse, differing with the rulers that are and the opinions that ought to be, and she shall be brought forward with all her poetical sins on her head ;—nay, let a married lady give us but an account of her voyage to India in following her betrothed husband, and she shall have gone there to get one ;—but speak not of “ the imputed weaknesses of the great.”* Princes might

* Quarterly Review, No. 18, p. 148.

formerly have kept mistresses; they might also have discarded them; and these discarded mistresses, if they sinned in rhyme, might be denounced accordingly, even to their rheumatism and their crutches;†—but no such things are done now, either by princes or the favourites of princes; speak not of “the imputed weaknesses of the great;”—there were vices at court formerly,—vices in Juvenal’s time,—vices even in our own time, when bad poets were going and ladies fell lame,—but now,—talk of no such thing; every prince lives with his wife as he ought to do, keeps the most virtuous company as he always did, and is hailed, of course, wherever he goes, with shouts of a cordial popularity:—the vices, that might reverse such a character, are only “imputed” to him;—to use a pithy and favourite mode of quotation, “There’s no such thing!”

With regard to Mr. Gifford’s poetical claims, which I had nearly forgotten, he seems to have thought very justly, that the Juvenal required something better than the usual monotonous versification; but in aiming at vi-

* See a pleasant and manly fling at Mrs. Robinson’s “crutches” in the *Baviad*, v. 28.

gour and variety, he has fallen into no versification at all, and become lame and prosaical. The only approach that he ever made to the poetical character was in some pleasing and even pathetic lines in the notes to his *Mœviad*, beginning

I wish I was where Anna lies;—

but such lines coming in such a place, in the very thick of petty resentments and vulgar personalities, contradict the better taste that is in them, and give the reader perhaps as distasteful an idea of the author, at the time of life when he inserted them, as any one passage of his writings.

¹⁰ *For his host was a God,—what a very great thing !
And what was still greater in his eyes,—a King !*

Ἀναξ Ἀπολλων—King Apollo,—a common title with the old Grecian poets.—See the following note.

*¹¹ Be original, man ; study more, scribble less,
Nor mistake present favour for lasting success ;
And remember, if laurels are what you would find,
The crown of all triumph is freedom of mind.*

Of Mr. Walter Scott's innate and trusting reverence for thrones and dominations, the reader may find specimens abundantly nauseous in the edition of Dryden. His style in prose, setting aside its Scotticisms, is very well where he affects nothing beyond a plain statement or a brief piece of criticism ; and it is not to be supposed that his critical observations are always destitute of acuteness or even of beauty ; but the moment he attempts any thing of particular ease or profundity, he only becomes slovenly in the one instance and poetically pedantic in the other. His politics may be estimated at once by the simple fact, that of all the advocates of Charles the Second, he is the least scrupulous in mentioning his crimes, because he is the least abashed. Other writers have paid decency the compliment of doubting their extent or of keeping them

in the back-ground ; but here we have the plainest, tooth-picking acknowledgements, that Charles was a pensioner of France, a shameless debauchee, a heartless friend, and an assassinating master, and yet all the while he is little else but the “ gay monarch,” the “ merry monarch,” the “ witty monarch,” the “ good-natured monarch ;” and Mr. Scott really appears to think little or nothing of all that he says against him. On the other hand, let a villain be but a Whig, or let any unfortunate person, with singular, Southern notions of independence, be but an opposer of Charles’s court, and he is sure to meet with a full and crying denunciation of his offences, with raised hands and lifted eyeballs. The execution of Charles the First Mr. Scott calls an enormity unequalled in modern history, till the present age furnished a parallel :—massacres, of course, and other trifles of that sort, particularly when kings and courtiers are the actors, fade before it ; St. Bartholomew’s day deserves to be counted lucky in comparison with it ; and princely villains like Henry the Eighth, Ezzelino, and Borgia, are respectable and conscientious men by the side of the President Bradshaw and his colleagues. At the same time, a king, who by the basest means and for the slightest

cause would assassinate a faithful servant in the very act of performing his duty, is only ungenerous,—one of whom the said servant has no small reason to complain. The reader may think this representation exaggerated, but let the author speak for himself. “ His political principles (the Earl of Mulgrave’s) were those of a staunch Tory, which he maintained through his whole life; and he was zealous for the royal prerogative, although he had *no small reason to complain* of Charles the Second, who to avenge himself of Mulgrave for a supposed attachment to the Princess Anne, sent him to Tangiers, at the head of some troops, *in a leaky vessel, which it was supposed must have perished in the voyage*. Though Mulgrave was apprized of the danger, he scorned to shun it; and the Earl of Plymouth, a favourite son of the King, generously insisted upon sharing it along with him. This *ungenerous attempt* to destroy him in the very act of performing his duty, with the refusal of a regiment, made a temporary change in Mulgrave’s conduct.” Notes on Absalom and Achitopel in Dryden’s Works, vol. ix. p. 304.

Of Mr. Walter Scott’s poetry the estimate is sufficiently easy, and will now perhaps, after the surfeit he has given

us of it, be pretty generally acknowledged. It is little more than a leap back into the dress and the diction of rude but gorgeous times, when show concealed a great want of substance, and a little thinking was conveyed in a great many words. Thus it is not invidious to call the late demand for it a fashion, for it was almost as mere a fashion as the revival of any other artificial mode, and just as likely to go out again. That Mr. Scott is a poet is not to be controverted;—he has a lightsome fancy, pleasing circumstance, luxury of description; and in his idea of Marmion has shown a taste for that mixture of genuine human character with the abstractions of poetry, which is a mark of no ordinary genius for narrative. But when the novelty of a particular mode of style is gone, a poet will obtain reputation for little else than a discernment of other men's beauties, who has no natural language and no style of his own,—who cannot describe what he sees and feels but in phrases previously set down for him,—and who must therefore be suspected of seeing and feeling, not so much from his own perceptions, as from the suggestions of those that have gone before him. Mr. Scott's ladies gay and barons bold, his full-wells and

I-pray-yous, his drinkings of "*the red wine*" and his "*kirtles of the cramasie*,"—his rhymes pressed in to the service, and his verses dancing away now and then out of the measure, may have been new to the town in general, but they are as ancient as recollection itself to the readers of poetry ; and a person tolerably well read in old songs and stories might exclaim with Dr. Johnson on a similar occasion,

Wheresoe'er I turn my view,
All is old and nothing new,
Trick'd in antique ruff and bonnet.

The plea, if any such has been made, of suiting the language of the poem to the manners of the story, is a mere excuse for want of power to talk naturally: for to say nothing of the continued modern smoothness which is added to the old versification, and of the different periods of time to which the self-same language is applied, no writers, not excepting the old romancers themselves, ever did or could adapt their language to the times of their story, unless the events they described were contemporaneous. The romancers indeed notoriously violated every species of *proper* costume to suit themselves to their own

period, and if they had attempted to retain an *improper* costume and to talk in the language of previous times, we should in vain have looked for those natural bursts of passion, and all those affecting simplicities, which they were enabled to put in the mouths of others, by speaking, as they felt, from their own. Thus even what was a natural language in these writers, becomes, from the imitation, an unnatural and affected one in Mr. Scott; and in fact, he talks the language of no times and of no feelings, for his style is too flowing to be ancient, too antique to be modern, and too artificial in every respect to be the result of his own first impressions.

There is indeed a general want of ambition about Mr. Scott, and a contentedness with what is showy rather than solid, that look like a poet of no very great order. His resorting to a style so easy of imitation, his giving himself up to a profusion of words and prettinesses on which he might rhyme by the hour, and his coming out, year after year, with a new poem provocative of all sorts of suspicions connected with the *trade*,—all exhibit something, ready indeed, and entertaining, and penny-turning, but very far from what is either lasting or noble. Mr. Scott writes

a very sprightly ballad, can sketch a good character from the life, and can hide himself to advantage in the costume of other times ; but brought forward in his own unassisted person, and judged by a high standard of poetry, he wants originality and a language.

*¹² But there's one thing I've always forgotten to mention,
Your versification,—pray give it invention.*

Mr. Campbell seems to have hampered his better genius between the versification of others and the struggle to express his own thoughts in their natural language. I speak not of the Pleasures of Hope, which though abundant in promise, is a young and uninformed production in comparison with his subsequent performances :—but I am persuaded that nobody would ever have thought of comparing that poem with the Gertrude of Wyoming, or of undervaluing the latter in general, and regarding it as not answering the promise of his youth, if in quitting the ordinary versification of the day, he had not deviated into another imitation and got into the trammels of

Spenser. The style perhaps is not so much an imitation of Spenser, as of Thomson, the imitator of Spenser; but the want of originality is certainly not lessened by this remove from the fountain-head. In Spenser's style and stanza there is undoubtedly a great deal of harmony and dignity, and specimens of almost every beauty of writing may be found in them; but they will hardly be pleasing now-a-days in a poem of any length, unless the subject involves a portion of the humorous or satirical, as in the *School-Mistress* and the *Castle of Indolence*, where the author looks through his seriousness with a smile, and the quaintnesses of the old poetry fall in with his lurking archness or his assumed importance. And the reasons would seem to be obvious; for not to dwell upon the inherent and unaccommodating faults of the stanza in a long English poem, such as its tendency to circumlocution and its multitude of similar rhymes, it has always an air of direct imitation, which is unbefitting the dignity of an original seriousness; and its old words and inversions contradict that freshness and natural flow of language, which we have a right to expect in the poet that would touch our affections. We demand,—not the copy of

another's simplicity, but the simplicity of the speaker himself;—we want an unaffected, contemporaneous language, such as our ears and our hearts shall equally recognize, and such as our own feelings would utter, were they as eloquent as the poets. The choice of this style is the more to be regretted in Mr. Campbell, because his genius evidently points to the most attractive sympathies of our nature, and his great talent lies in the pathetic. Indeed it is observable, how inevitably his own taste leads him to forget the imitative turn of his versification, whenever he has to describe some particular scene, in which the affections are interested; but the present stock of readers, who have had their ears spoiled by easy versification, will not readily consent to exchange it for one of a less accommodating description with additional difficulties. Of several styles of imitation that come before them, they will inevitably prefer that which comes easiest to their old habits; and this is one great reason why the productions of Mr. Walter Scott have outrun in popularity the coy loveliness of *Gertrude of Wyoming*,—the finest narrative poem, in my mind, that has been produced in the present day.—While I have been palled with the eter-

nal sameness of Mr. Scott, and disgusted with the puerilities and affectations of Mr. Southey, I have read over and over again the Gertrude of Wyoming, and have paid it that genuine tribute, which the pride of manhood and the necessary habits of adversity are not much in the custom of lavishing.

In speaking of Mr. Campbell, his smaller pieces must not be forgotten. Their merits are very unequal, and some of them, written perhaps in early youth, seem altogether unworthy of his pen ; but Hohenlinden, and the two naval songs, are noble pieces, beautifully dashed with the pathetic ; and the Soldier's Dream is one of those heartfelt and domestic appeals, from which the fancy, after dwelling upon their tenderness, is suddenly glad to escape.

*13 And never should poet so gifted and rare,
Pollute the bright Eden Jove gives to his care,
But love the fair Virtue for whom it is given,
And keep the spot pure for the visits of Heaven.*

It is natural in congratulating a person on his escape from some extraordinary defect, to forget the mention of

smaller ones; otherwise, Apollo might have rallied Mr. Moore on his exuberant fondness for dews, flowers, and exclamations, and have quarrelled with him for not applying his powers to some poem of length that should exhibit them in their proper light. The first of these faults however will most likely follow the other misdemeanours of his youth: and the latter he is understood to be doing away, at this moment, in a country retirement. Certainly the pernicious tendency of Mr. Moore's former productions is to be questioned:—it was only to be equalled perhaps by the good that might result from a change in his way of thinking, and from the pains he would take, when so altered, to transfer the attractiveness of his style to the cause of virtue. But there always appeared to me, in the midst of that taste of his, a cordial and redeeming something,—a leaning after the better affections,—which showed a conscious necessity of correcting it. Part with it altogether he need not as a writer, and could not as a poet; but to correct and unite it with nobler sympathies was his business as a true lover both of the sex and of his country. It would have been inconsistent in a politician so spirited, and a patriot so warm as

Mr. Moore, to assist in rendering us slaves in private, while he would have us all freemen in public.

The real admirers therefore of this poet were rejoiced to see in his latter publication, the *Irish Melodies*, how greatly he had improved his morality, and not only so, but how much the graces of his fancy had gained instead of lost by the improvement. In the sprightly and idiomatic flow of his songs he had already overtaken Prior, and on the ground of sentiment had left him behind; but the union of strong fancy and feeling discoverable in his later productions, and the unexpected appearance of a taste for the dignified and contemplative, so distinct from the town associations that crowded about one's ordinary idea of him, were promises of a still greater reputation, and will enable him, it is trusted, to reach posterity under an exemplary as well as graceful aspect.

As a versifier, Mr. Moore does not appear, hitherto, to have attempted any improvement of the models he found in vogue; but what he might do in this respect may easily be conceived, from the natural fineness of his ear. The lines in his lyric pieces however have a music in them, distinct from the ordinary monotony of his contemporaries, and evidently traceable to his taste for the sister art.

You feel at once, that his songs are indeed to be sung,—
a happy propriety, which he seems to share exclusively
with Dryden.

¹⁴ See Note ²⁶. The Sackville here mentioned must not
be confounded with Rochester's cotemporary, the author
of the excellent song, "To all you ladies now at land,"
who was a man of wit and good humour, but no poet.
The allusion is to his ancestor, the author of the noble
Induction to the Mirror of Magistrates, and harbinger of
Spenser.

¹⁵ *When, all of a sudden, there rose on the stairs
A noise as of persons with singular airs ;
You'd have thought 'twas the Bishops or Judges a coming,
Or whole court of Aldermen hawing and humming,
Or Abbot, at least, with his ushers before,
But 'twas only Bob Southey and two or three more.*

The last couplet originally stood thus,—

*Or at least my Lord Colley with all his grand brothers ;
But 'twas only Bob Southey and three or four others.*

Colley is one of the Christian names of the Marquis
Wellesley. I notice this alteration, lest having felt myself

bound to make it, I should seem to evade its acknowledgement. There are still some points about the Noble Marquis, which I may not particularly admire; but the policy he has lately pursued and avowed, the just appreciation he seems to have formed of the contest with Bonaparte, and the military genius displayed by his brother in the Peninsula, are very far from warranting any contemptuous allusion to him or his family. There used to be certainly a feeling of distaste to them on account of their imputed haughtiness; nor did the Indian governorship, or their domestic politics, tend to diminish it; but the Marquis's present conduct seems to be rather independent than arrogant; and there is a well-tempered and strait-forward simplicity about the military character of the Field Marshal, worthy of the great cause to which his sword made an opening.* The original line therefore, such as it is, stands against myself, and not against the noble brothers.

The next part of the passage alludes to the affectation of universal superiority,—of being best and wisest in

* This sword for the point, and the physical and moral robustness of the English soldiery for the body, have since formed a wedge, which has finally split asunder the power of Bonaparte.

whatever they felt, thought, and did,—which used to mark the Lake Poets in the days of their innocence, and has not forsaken them now that they are men of the world. It was then, however, a pardonable piece of boyishness and enthusiasm, at which good nature would smile;—now, it has become a full-grown and insolent pretension, which good sense must deride.

It is curious to see with what apparent unconsciousness this change has been affected. The best feature in their character, till of late years, was their public as well as private integrity; but the maudlin German cant which first infected their muse at last corrupted their manners, and being a jargon adapted to every sort of extreme, enabled them to change their free opinions for slavish ones, without altering the cast of their language. Good opinion still lingered about some of them; but latterly the very best have quite lost the bloom of their character, and degenerated, like the others, into servile place-hunters, and gross editorial puffers of themselves. Mr. Southey has accepted an office under government, of such a nature, as absolutely ties up his independence; Mr. Coleridge, in pamphlets and newspapers, has done his best to deserve likewise; and yet they shall all tell you that they have not diminished

their free spirit a jot.* In like manner, they are as violent and intolerant against their old opinions, as ever they were against their new ones, and without seeing how far the argument carries, shall insist that no man can possess a decent head or respectable heart who does not agree with them. Persons who go to neither extreme, are of course to expect still less mercy, if possible. Mr. Southey, who is one of the pensioned reviewers in the Quarterly, does not blush to tell those who are acquainted with his former opinions of the great and their corruptions, that a mere stickler for Reform now-a-days, even with good intentions, is little better than a "house-breaker."† Poor fellow! he must have been a sad well-meaning profligate in his younger days!—It is in vain you tell such reasoners, that you are neither Jacobin nor courtier, that

* Mr. Wordsworth's name was added to these two in the first edition; but it seems that he regards his office as a private favour bestowed by an old friend of his family, and still vindicates his right to think and speak as he pleases.

† See an article on the State of the Poor, in a late number of the Quarterly. I mention the authors of these reviews with the less scruple, because I think that anonymous writers in general have no *right* of concealment, particularly when they attack people in this manner,—and because I never thought myself at liberty to conceal my own name, when it either was asked or might be so.

you have never made a noise about equality, as they did formerly, nor ever truckled to the vice of a court, as they do now :—you differ with them ; and that is enough, with their intolerant egotism, to prove you both fool and knave.

The grossness of this utter defiance of candour and consistency would be too despicable for notice, did it not tend to bring all profession and principle into doubt,—and to add strength, by so doing, to the scepticism of men of the world, and bitterness to the reflexions of those who suffer for being otherwise. But let us never forget to separate an honest and tried consistency from the vague, complexional enthusiasm that starts away at the sight of danger, and runs into any and every extreme. The persons of whom we have been speaking have been always in extremes, and perhaps the good they are destined to perform in their generation, is to afford a striking lesson of the inconsistencies naturally produced by so being. Nothing remains the same but their vanity.

To conclude, before Mr. Southey accepted those meaner laurels which Apollo, in the succeeding lines, has so much reason to disdain, there was a native goodness about his character, and a taste for placid virtue in his

writings, which conciliated regard and made us think of him with a pertinacious kindness. I will not answer, that my ideas of his poetry have not been of too high a description on this account, relying as they did on what appeared to be indicative of a finer species of mind, and to promise something greater than he had yet performed; but latterly he seems every day to have been growing more and more contented with all sorts of trucklings,—trucklings to court, trucklings to common-places, trucklings to the writer's trade.

Of all the Lake poets,—those, at least, who have obtained any eminence,—he is unquestionably the tritest in every respect. He is no more to be compared with Mr. Wordsworth in real genius than the man who thinks once out of a hundred times is with him who thinks the whole hundred; but that he is at the same time a poet, will be no more denied, than that the hundredth part of Mr. Wordsworth's genius would make a poet. His fancy perhaps has gone little beyond books, but still it is of a truly poetical character; he touches the affections pleasingly though not powerfully; and his moral vein stands him in stead, as it ought to do, of a good deal of dignity in other

respects. What he wants in the gross, is a natural strength of thinking, and in the particular, a real style of his own; for as his simplicity is more a thing of words than of thoughts, he naturally borrows his language from those who have thought for him. What Mr. Wordsworth conceals from you, or in fact overcomes by the growth of his own mind, Mr. Southey leaves open and bald,—a direct imitation, prominent with nothing but *haths*, *ands*, *yeas*, *evens*, and other fragments of old speech. As to his attempt to bring back the Cowleian licentiousness of metre in another shape, and with nothing like an ear to make it seducing, it is a mere excuse for haste and want of study.

For the more complacent opinion formerly held of Mr. Southey's general character, Apollo, I am afraid, is not so easily to be defended as myself, inasmuch as a want of foresight is unbecoming his prophetic character;—but this I leave to be settled by some future BURMAN or BIFFIUS, whenever he shall do me the honour to find out the learning of this egregious performance, and publish the Feast of the Poets in two volumes quarto. Apollo, like other vivacious spirits, chose to do without his foresight

sometimes,—as the commentator will no doubt have the goodness to show for me.

By the way, speaking of Mr. Southey's court laurels, of which I have luckily said enough in another publication, people have not forgotten what he said formerly of "the degraded title of epic," and of his objections to write accordingly under such degradation. How is it, that he has not expressed a similar horror at the degraded title of Poet Laureat? He cannot pretend to say that it is not so, for setting aside the remaining reasons, one of the very persons who helped to degrade the one, contributed to do as much for the other. Would it not be better in some future edition of his works, to alter that word "degraded" into some more convenient epithet, such as *worthless* for instance,—that is to say, valueless,—pennyless,—something that does not give one a pension?

*16 For Coleridge had vex'd him long since, I suppose,
By his idling, and gabbling, and muddling in prose ;—*

Mr. Coleridge is a man of great natural talents, as they who most lament his waste of them, are the readiest to

acknowledge. Indeed it is their conviction in this respect, which induces them to feel the waste as they do ; and if Apollo shows him no quarter, it is evidently because he looks upon him as a deserter. Of his poetical defects enough will be said in speaking of those of Mr. Wordsworth ; and if as much cannot be said of his kindred beauties, it is rather perhaps because he has written less and is a man of less industry, than because he does not equal the latter in genius. The allusion in the text is to his strange periodical publication, called ‘ The Friend.’—See Note ¹⁸.

There was an idle report, it seems, on the first appearance of Mr. Coleridge’s tragedy, that I was the instigator of a party to condemn it. The play, as it happened, was not condemned, nor does any such party appear to have existed ;—the criticism also, which was written upon it in the *Examiner*, by a friend, must have removed, I should think, all doubts on that head. It is very certain, that at the time of its appearance I was too ill to be out of doors,—nor is it less so, that regarding myself as a reporter of the public judgment in these matters, I never thought myself justified in being a party on either side

vivâ voce. Mr. Coleridge should do more credit to his own notions of opposition, than to suppose me capable of these idle tricks. If he still persists however in thinking it extraordinary that I should exhibit a more lively regret than others at seeing him throw away his fine genius as he has done, he may attribute it, if he pleases, to a cause from which he seems to have expected a reverse kind of treatment,—to my having been bred up, as well as himself, in the humble but not unlettered school, over which his memory might have thrown a lustre.*

* The Grammar-school of Christ's Hospital. Of this institution, which is of a truly English description, and a sort of medium betwixt the high breeding of the more celebrated foundations and the conscious humility of the charity-school, see a very interesting account in some late numbers of the Gentleman's Magazine by my friend Charles Lamb, who was contemporary there with Coleridge, and of whose powers of wit and observation I should delight to say more, if he had not confined those chief talents of his to the fireside. Mr. Coleridge, I believe, helped to give a new stimulus to the literary ambition of his school-fellows. We cannot boast of many great names; but of such as we have, we are fond in proportion to their fewness. It was here that the celebrated Camden received the rudiments of his learning; and I recollect, it used to be a proud enjoyment to us to witness the grateful inscriptions in gold letters with which Joshua Barnes had adorned the books that he presented to the library. As to college honours, at least in the Belles Lettres, it may be truly said that the school has of late years grown familiar with them.

*17 And Wordsworth, one day, made his very hairs bristle,
By going and changing his harp for a whistle.*

The allusion here scarcely needs a remark; but in revising my verses, and endeavouring to do justice to Mr. Wordsworth, I was anxious, whenever I mentioned him, to show myself sensible of the great powers he possesses, and with what sort of gift he has consented to trifle.

*18 When one began spouting the cream of orations
In praise of bombarding one's friends and relations;*

Mr. Coleridge, in his 'Friend,' ventured upon a studious and even cordial defence (at least so his readers understood it) of the attack on Copenhagen,—one of those lawless outrages, done in the insolence and impatience of power, which at first brought infamy, and have at last brought down retribution, upon the head of Bonaparte. The imitation of such actions proves how little the contest

against him was understood at the time, either in its moral or political point of view, or rather in its only proper point of view, which comprises both;—but the world appears to have learnt better since. The above parenthesis is used in speaking of the general acceptation of Mr. Coleridge's meaning, because he himself, it appears, has astounded some people by deprecating such a construction.

*19 And t'other some lines he had made on a straw,
Showing how he had found it, and what it was for,
&c. &c.*

I am told, on very good authority, that this parody upon Mr. Wordsworth's worst style of writing has been taken for a serious extract from him, and panegyricized accordingly, with much grave wonderment how I could find it ridiculous.—See the next note.

20 And all cried at last with a passion sublime,

“ This, this is the Prince of the Bards of his Time !”

Whatever may be the faults of Mr. Wordsworth, it certainly appears to me, that we have had no poet since the days of Spenser and Milton,—so allied in the better part of his genius to those favoured men, not excepting even Collins, who saw farther into the sacred places of poetry than any man of the last age. Mr. Wordsworth speaks less of the vulgar tongue of the profession than any writer since that period ; he always thinks when he speaks, has always words at command, feels deeply, fancies richly, and never descends from that pure and elevated morality, which is the native region of the first order of poetical spirits.

To those who doubt the justice of this character, and who have hitherto seen in Mr. Wordsworth nothing but trifling and childishness, and who at the same time speak with rapture of Spenser and Milton, I would only recommend the perusal of such poems as the Female Vagrant,

(see "Lyrical Ballads and other Poems," vol. 1, pa. 85),—a little piece on the Nightingale, at p. 312,* the three little exquisite pieces from p. 128 to 131, another at p. 313,—the Old Cumberland Beggar (a piece of perfect description philosophized),—Louisa, the Happy Warrior, to H. C., the Sonnet entitled London, another on Westminster Bridge, another beginning "The World is too much with us," the majestic simplicity of the Ode to Duty, a noble subject most nobly treated, and the simple, deep-felt, and calm yet passionate grandeur of the poem entitled Laodamia. If after this, they can still see nothing beautiful or great in Mr. Wordsworth's writings, we must conclude that their insight into the beauties of Spenser and Milton is imaginary,—and that they speak in praise of those writers as they do in dispraise of Mr. Wordsworth, merely by rote.

* Another poem on this bird mentioned in the former edition was, I afterwards found, Mr. Coleridge's; and I had to congratulate myself accordingly on having said what I had, in a previous note, respecting his congeniality with Mr. Wordsworth in point of real powers. It is a pity that all the poems written by Mr. Coleridge are not collected in one publication.

It may be asked me then, why, with such opinions as I entertain of the greatness of Mr. Wordsworth's genius, he is treated as he is in some of the verses before us; I answer, because he abuses that genius so as Milton or Spenser never abused it, and so as to endanger those great ends of poetry, by which it should assist the uses and refresh the spirits of life. From him, to whom much is given, much shall be required. Mr. Wordsworth is capable of being at the head of a new and great age of poetry; and in point of fact, I do not deny that he is so already, as the greatest poet of the present;—but in point of effect, in point of delight and utility, he appears to me to have made a mistake unworthy of him, and to have sought by eccentricity and by a turning away from society, what he might have obtained by keeping to his proper and more neighbourly sphere. Had he written always in the spirit of the pieces above-mentioned, his readers would have felt nothing but delight and gratitude; but another spirit interferes, calculated to do good neither to their taste nor reflections; and after having been elevated and depressed, refreshed and sickened, pained, pleased, and tortured, we sometimes close his volumes, as

we finish a melancholy day, with feelings that would go to sleep in forgetfulness, and full waking faculties too busy to suffer it.

The theory of Mr. Wordsworth,—if I may venture to give in a few words my construction of the curious and, in many respects, very masterly preface to the Lyrical Ballads, is this ;—that owing to a variety of existing causes, among which are the accumulation of men in cities and the necessary uniformity of their occupations,—and the consequent craving for extraordinary incident, which the present state of the world is quick to gratify, the taste of society has become so vitiated and so accustomed to gross stimulants, such as “frantic novels, *sickly* and stupid German tragedies, and deluges of *idle* and *extravagant* stories in verse,” as to require the counteraction of some simpler and more primitive food, which should restore to readers their true tone of enjoyment, and enable them to relish once more the beauties of simplicity and nature ;—that, to this purpose, a poet in the present age, who looked upon men with his proper eye, as an entertainer and instructor, should chuse subjects as far removed as possible from artificial excitements, and appeal to the

great and primary affections of our nature ;—thirdly and lastly, that these subjects, to be worthily and effectively treated, should be clothed in language equally artless. I pass over the contingent parts of the Preface, though touching out, as they go, some beautiful ideas respecting poets and poetry in general, both because I have neither time nor room to consider them, and because they are not so immediate to my purpose. I shall merely observe, by the way, that Mr. Wordsworth, though he has a fine Miltonic ear, does not seem to have exercised his reflections much on the subject of versification, and must protest against that attempt of his to consider perfect poetry as not essentially connected with metre,—an innovation, which would detract from the poet's properties, and shut up one of the finest inlets of his enjoyment and nourishers of his power,—the sense of the harmonious. *

Now the object of the theory here mentioned has clearly nothing in the abstract, that can offend the soundest good sense or the best poetical ambition. In fact, it is only

* In the preface to the late edition of his poems, p. 18, Mr. Wordsworth seems to have tacitly retracted on this head.

saying, in other words, that it is high time for poetry in general to return to nature and to a natural style, and that he will perform a great and useful work to society, who shall assist it to do so. I am not falling, by this interpretation, into the error which Mr. Wordsworth very justly deprecates, when he warns his readers against affecting to agree with him in terms, when they really differ with him in taste. The truth which he tells, however obvious, is necessary to be told, and to be told loudly; and he should enjoy the praise which he deserves, of having been the first, in these times, to proclaim it. But the question is, (and he himself puts it at the end of his Preface,) has Mr. Wordsworth “attained his object?” Has he acted up to his theory? Has he brought back that natural style, and restored to us those healthy and natural perceptions, which he justly describes as the proper state of our poetical constitution? I think not. He has shown that he could do it, and in many instances he has set the example; but the effect of at least many other passages in his poetry, and those, I believe, which he views with most partiality, appears to me to be otherwise: it tends, in my mind, to go to the other extreme of what he deprecates,

and to substitute one set of diseased perceptions for another.

Delight or utility is the aim of the poet. Mr. Wordsworth, like one who has a true sense of the dignity of his profession, would unite both; and indeed, for their perfect ends, they cannot be separated. He finds then our taste for the one vitiated, and our profit of the other destroyed, and he says to us, "Your complexion is diseased;—your blood fevered; you endeavour to keep up your pleasurable sensations by stimulants too violent to last, and which must be succeeded by others of still greater violence:—this will not do: your mind wants air and exercise,—fresh thoughts and natural excitements:—up, my friend; come out with me among the beauties of nature and the simplicities of life, and feel the breath of heaven about you."—No advice can be better: we feel the call instinctively; we get up, accompany the poet into his walks, and acknowledge them to be the best and most beautiful; but what do we meet there? Idiot Boys, Mad Mothers, Wandering Jews, Visitations of Ague, Indian Women left to die on the road, and Frenzied Mariners, who are fated to accost us with tales that

almost make one's faculties topple over.*—These are his refreshing thoughts, his natural excitements; and when you have finished with these, you shall have the smallest of your fugitive reflections arrested and embodied in a long lecture upon a thorn, or a story of a duffel-cloak, till thorns and duffel-cloaks absolutely confound you with their importance in life;—and these are his elementary feelings, his calm and counteracting simplicities.

Let the reader observe that I am not objecting to these subjects in behalf of that cowardly self-love falsely called sensibility, or merely because they are of what is termed a distressing description, but because they are carried to an *excess* that defeats the poet's intention, and distresses to no purpose. Nor should I select them as exhibiting a part of the character of Mr. Wordsworth's writings, rather than pass them over as what they really are, the defects of a great poet,—if the author himself had not

* The last of these "idle and extravagant stories" was written, it seems, by Mr. Coleridge. The pieces, by the way, supplied by this gentleman, have been left out of the late collection of Mr. Wordsworth's poems.

especially invited our attention towards them as part of his system of counteraction, and if these and his occasional puerilities of style, in their disadvantageous effect upon his readers, did not involve the whole character and influence of his poetry.

But how is our passion for stimulants to be allayed by the substitution of stories like Mr. Wordsworth's? He wishes to turn aside our thirst for extraordinary intelligence, to more genial sources of interest, and he gives us accounts of mothers who have gone mad at the loss of their children, of others who have killed their's in the most horrible manner, and of hard-hearted masters whose imaginations have revenged upon them the curses of the poor. In like manner, he would clear up and simplicize our thoughts; and he tells us tales of children that have no notion of death, of boys who would halloo to a landscape nobody knew why, and of an hundred inexpressible sensations, intended by nature no doubt to affect us, and even pleasurably so in the general feeling, but only calculated to perplex or sadden us in our attempts at analysis. Now it appears to me, that all the craving after intelligence, which Mr. Wordsworth imagines to be the bane of

the present state of society, is a healthy appetite in comparison to these morbid abstractions: the former tends, at any rate, to fix the eyes of mankind in a lively manner upon the persons that preside over their interests, and to keep up a certain demand for knowledge and public improvement ;—the latter, under the guise of interesting us in the individuals of our species, turns our thoughts away from society and men altogether, and nourishes that eremitical vagueness of sensation,—that making a business of reverie,—that despair of getting to any conclusion to any purpose, which is the next step to melancholy or indifference.

It is with this persuasion,—a persuasion, which has not come to me through the want of acquaintance either with solitude or society, or with the cares of either,—that I have ventured upon the piece of ridicule in the text. Mr. Wordsworth has beautifully told us, that to him

———— the meanest flow'r that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

I have no doubt of it; and far be it from me to cast stones into the well in which they lie,—to disturb those

reposing waters,—that freshness at the bottom of warm hearts,—those thoughts, which if they are too deep for tears, are also, in their best mood, too tranquil even for smiles. Far be it also from me to hinder the communication of such thoughts to mankind, when they are not sunk beyond their proper depth, so as to make one dizzy in looking down to them. The walk of Shakspeare is full of them; but he has managed to apply them to their proper refreshing purposes; and has given us but one fond re-cluse in his whole works,—the melancholy Jaques. Shall we forget the attractions which this melancholy philosopher felt towards another kind of philosopher, whom he met in the forest, and who made a jest of every thing? Let us be sure, that this is one of the results of pushing our abstractions too far, and of that dangerous art which Mr. Wordsworth has claimed for his simpler pieces,—the giving importance to actions and situations by our feelings, instead of adapting our feelings to the importance they possess. The consequence of this, if carried into a system, would be, that we could make any thing or nothing important, just as diseased or healthy impulses told us;—a straw might awaken in us as many profound, but

certainly not as useful reflections, as the fellow-creature that lay upon it; till at last, perplexed between the importance which every thing had obtained in our imaginations, and the little use of this new system of equality to the action and government of life, we might turn from elevating to depreciating,—from thinking trifling things important, to thinking important things trifling; and conclude our tale of extremes by closing in with expedience and becoming men of the world.—I would not willingly disturb the spirit, in which these remarks are written, by unpleasant allusions: but among the numerous acquaintances of Mr. Wordsworth, who have fallen in with his theories, perhaps he may be reminded of some, who have exemplified what I mean. He himself, though marked as government property, may walk about his fields uninjured, from the usual simplicity of his life and from very ignorance of what he has undergone; but those who never possessed the real wisdom of his simplicity, will hardly retain the virtue; and as in less healthy men, a turn for the worst taste of his reverie would infallibly be symptomatic of a weak state of stomach rather than of a fine strength of fancy, so in men of less intellect, the imitation of his smaller simplicities is

little else but an announcement of that vanity and weakness of mind, which is open to the first skilful corrupter that wishes to make use of it.

With regard to the language in which Mr. Wordsworth says that poetry should be written, his mistake seems to be this,—that instead of allowing degrees and differences in what is poetical, he would have all poetry to be one and the same in point of style, and no distinction allowed between natural and artificial associations. Nobody will contend with him that the language of nature is the best of all languages, and that the poet is at his height when he can be most fanciful and most feeling in expressions the most neighbourly and intelligible; but the poet may sometimes chuse to show his art in a manner more artful, and appealing to more particular associations than what are shared by the world at large, as those of classical readers for instance. It is true, by so doing, he narrows his dominion, and gives up the glory of a greater and more difficult sway; but he still rules us by a legitimate title, and is still a poet. In the one instance, he must have all the properties of the greatest of his profession,—fancy, feeling, knowledge;—in the other, he requires less feeling,

and for knowledge may substitute learning ;—a great inferiority no doubt, but still only differing in degree, for learning is but the knowledge of books, as knowledge is the learning of things. Mr. Wordsworth, to illustrate what he means, quotes the following sonnet of Gray, and says that “ the only part of it, which is of any value, is the lines printed in Italics :” *

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
 And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire ;
 The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
 Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.
 These ears alas ! for other notes repine,
A different object do these eyes require,
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine,
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire ;
 Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
 And new-born pleasure brings to happier men ;

* We repeat this sonnet with the less hesitation, because it does not appear in the usual editions of Gray, though one of the best and most original of his compositions. It was written on the death of his friend Richard West. By the way, however, he cannot help plagiarizing in the very midst of his feelings,—at least, he naturally incurs the suspicion of so doing by his general habits of that kind. The last verse is exactly like a saying of Solon’s, which is thus related in Bacon’s *Apophthegms*:—“ Solon, when he wept for his son’s death, and one said to him, ‘ Weeping will not help,’ answered, ‘ Alas, therefore I weep, because weeping will not help.’ ”

The fields to all their wonted tribute bear ;
To warm their little loves the birds complain.
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more because I weep in vain.

For the lines not marked in Italics much certainly cannot be said; but their chief fault, in point of association, and as specimens of the secondary species of poetry, is that they are misplaced; otherwise, in a piece professedly dealing in metaphorical and classical allusions, they would still be poetical, because still fanciful and because still referring to natural emotions. But the fairest mode of settling the question is to instance distinct pieces of the respective kinds, not those in which natural and artificial language interfere with each other and only serve to show the great superiority of the former over the latter. If Shakspeare, for example, had written only those two lines, one in the Merchant of Venice, where he speaks of moonlight,

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank,

and the other in Lear, where the poor old heart-bursting king, finding his trembling fingers too weak for him, and

yet not forgetting the habitual politeness of his rank, turns to somebody and says,

Pray you undo this button.—thank you, Sir—

he would have left to all posterity two exquisite proofs of his natural greatness in poetry, the one for fancy, the other for feeling. But on the other hand, Collins has left us little or nothing written in a natural language ;—almost the whole of his thoughts are turned upon personifications and learned abstractions, and expressed in what may be called the learned language of poetry ; yet to say nothing of his Odes on the Passions and Manners, there would be sufficient in that on the Poetical Character to stamp him a true poet ; and Mr. Wordsworth, by the way, with an evident feeling to this effect, has written an ode to his memory. It is the same with what Dryden calls the “ admirable Grecisms” of Milton.* Milton could write with a natural greatness, though not so well as Shakspeare ; but he chose also at times to be more artificial, and if he has been so too often, it only shows that his genius had less natural

* Essay on Satire, prefixed to the Juvenal.

greatness about it and a smaller consciousness of resources, not that he had then put off his poetry altogether. Had he heard, in his time, of the project for excluding all language and all associations from poetry, but those of natural passion and humanity, he would have spoken with new feelings of the cessation of those ancient oracles, that have breathed out upon us a second inspiration ; he would have lamented that

Apollo from his shrine
Should no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving ;

and have told us, with a share in the general sorrow, how

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament ;
From haunted spring and dale,
Edg'd with poplar pale,
The parting Genius is with sighing sent ;
With flow'r-inwoven tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thicket mourn.

If it were merely to keep such verses as these fresh for posterity, it would be worth while to protest against the exclusion of one species of poetry, merely because it has

an elder and nobler brother. But the truth is, the exclusion would do harm to the cause of poetry in general ; it would cut off, as we have seen, a direct portion of the skilful and delightful from poetry,—it would hinder a number of subjects from being treated poetically, that are now recommendable to the world by the process of versification ;—it would rid us of one set of pretenders only to inundate us with another much more insufferable, the pretenders to simplicity ; and finally, it would take away from the poetical profession something that answers to good breeding in manners, and that keeps it clear from rusticity and the want of an universal reception ; for Shakspeare, who might be thought a counter-example from his want of scholastic learning, is in fact a singular example the other way, enriching the ground-work of his writings with figures and metaphors even to crowding, and evidently alive to all the use and dignity of classical allusion :—not that a poet is always to be showing his reading or learning, or letting the secret of his taste escape him ; but that his taste in one respect, if managed like Shakspeare's, will teach him to feel what is best and most tasteful in others, and enable him to give a simple or passionate ex-

pression as much perfection on the score of nature, as a compounded and elaborate one upon that of art. Mr. Wordsworth, with something of a consciousness on this head, talks of selection in the very midst of what appears to others an absolute contempt of it. Now selection has an eye to effect, and is an acknowledgment that what is always at hand, though it may be equally natural, is not equally pleasing. Who are to be the judges then between him and his faults? Those, I think, who, delighted with his nature, and happy to see and to allow that he has merits of his own superior to his felicitous imitations of Milton, (for the latter, after all, though admired by some as his real excellence, are only the occasional and perhaps unconscious tributes of his admiration,) are yet dissatisfied and mortified with such encounterings of the bellman, as ‘Harry Gill and We are Seven;’—who think that in some of the effusions called ‘Moods of My Own Mind,’ *

* This title is omitted in the last edition.—Yet, in objecting to these pieces, it is impossible, I think, for any *poetical* mind not to be carried away with the enthusiasm of the song to a Skylark, or not to value the pure and exquisite sentiment wrapped up in the little piece on a Rainbow. See vol. I, of the late collection, pp. 268 and 1.

he mistakes the commonest process of reflection for its result, and the ordinary, every-day musings of any lover of the fields for original thinking;—who are of opinion, in short, that there is an extreme in nature as well as in art, and that this extreme, though not equally removed from the point of perfection, is as different from what it ought to be and what nature herself intended it to be, as the ragged horse in the desert is to the beautiful creature under the Arab, or the dreamer in a hermitage to the waking philosopher in society.

To conclude this inordinate note: Mr. Wordsworth, in objecting to one extreme, has gone to another,—the natural commencement perhaps of all revolutions. He thinks us over-active, and would make us over-contemplative,—a fault not likely to extend very widely, but which ought still to be deprecated for the sake of those to whom it would. We are, he thinks, too much crowded together, and too subject, in consequence, to high-fevered tastes and worldly infections. Granted:—he, on the other hand, lives too much apart, and is subject, we think, to low-fevered tastes and solitary morbidities;—but as there is health in both of us, suppose both parties strike a bar-

gain,—he to come among us a little more and get a true sense of our action,—we to go out of ourselves a little oftener and acquire a taste for his contemplation. We will make more holidays into nature with him; but he, in fairness, must earn them, as well as ourselves, by sharing our working-days :—we will emerge oftener into his fields, sit dangling our legs over his styles, and cultivate a due respect for his daffodils; but he, on the other hand, must grow a little better acquainted with our streets, must put up with our lawyers, and even find out a heart or so among our politicians :—in short, we will recollect that we have hearts and brains, and will feel and ponder a little more to purify us as spirits; but he will be good enough, in return, to cast an eye on his hands and muscles, and consider that the putting these to their purposes is necessary to complete our part in this world as organized bodies.

Here is the good to be done on both sides; and as society, I believe, would be much bettered in consequence, so there is no man, I am persuaded, more capable than Mr. Wordsworth, upon a better acquaintance with society, to have done it the service. Without that

acquaintance, his reputation in poetry, though very great, may be little more *salutary* than that of an Empedocles in philosophy or a Saint Francis in religion:—with it, he might have revived the spirit, the glory, and the utility of a Shakspeare.*

*²¹ And old Peter Pindar turn'd pale, and suppress'd,
With a death-bed sensation, a blasphemous jest.*

It is a pity that this pleasant reprobate had not a little more principle in his writings, for he has really a most

* Since this note, with little variation, was written, Mr. Wordsworth has collected his minor pieces into the two volumes so often referred to, and has published also two new and large poems, the 'Excursion,' and the 'White Doe of Rylstone.' It does not strike me, however, that I should alter it any further in consequence; though I confess I have risen, if possible, in my admiration of this great genius. The White Doe, it is true, which seems to have been written some time back, does not appear to be among his happiest performances, though containing, as almost all his performances do, touches of exquisite beauty. It is a narrative poem; and there is something in this kind of writing too much *out in the world* for the author's habitual powers. Reverie has been his delight; and the Excursion, with some objectionable parts on the old score, is a succession of noble reveries.

original vein of humour,—such a mixture of simplicity, archness, and power of language, with an air of Irish helplessness running throughout, as is irresistibly amusing, and constitutes him a class by himself. He is the Fontaine of lampooners.—I know not whether any body ever thought of turning to him for his versification; but the lovers of the English heroic would be pleased, as well as surprised, to find in his management of it a more easy and various music than in much higher poets.

22 And with vine-leaves and Jump-up-and-kiss-me, Tom Moore's.

The meaning of all these intercoronations is not as obvious, I am afraid, as it might be. The cypress is a funeral evergreen;—the thistle the Scotch emblem;—the blow-bell another description of thistle, flimsy-headed, and liable to have its swelling character altered by the first gust of wind;—and the mandragoras, or mandrake, is the old lethargic vegetable, which is associated with so many mysterious stories, and said to groan if you offer to

disturb it. Some oak is given to Mr. Campbell for his naval odes, and the shamrock to Mr. Moore for that ardent and disinterested patriotism, which has done him such honour, particularly with those who know how much it has cost him. The celandine is the flower especially chosen by Mr. Wordsworth for his peculiar patronage; and to this is added pine and aloe, the first for its lofty growth in mountain solitudes, and the second for its blowing once in a hundred years. The allusion of the willow and of the vine-leaves is obvious; and turks-cap, creeper, penny-royal, and Jump-up-and-kiss-me, want no explanation, except that the last is one of the variety of names, which the fondness of popular admiration, in all countries, has lavished upon the beautiful little tri-coloured violet, commonly called the Heart's-ease.

It is pleasant to light upon an universal favourite, whose merits answer one's expectation. We know little or nothing of the common flowers among the ancients; but as violets in general have their due mention among the poets that have come down to us, it is to be concluded that the Heart's-ease could not miss its particular admiration,—if indeed it existed among them in its perfection. The mo-

dern Latin name for it is *Flos Jovis* or Jove's Flower,—an appellation rather too worshipful for its little sparkling delicacy, and more suitable to the greatness of an hydrangia or to the diadems of a rhododendron.

Quæque per irriguas quærenda Sisymbria valles
Crescunt, nectendis cum myrto nata coronis ;
Flosque Jovis varius, folii tricoloris, et ipsi
Par violæ, nulloque tamen spectatus odore.

Rapini Hortorum, lib. 1.

With all the beauties in the vallies bred,
Wild Mint, that's born with myrtle crowns to wed,
And Jove's own Flow'r, that shares the violet's pride,
Its want of scent with triple charm supplied.

The name given it by the Italians is *Flammola*, the Little Flame, an appellation which, since writing this note, I have found to be taken from the Greeks, by whom it was called *Phlox*, a Flame. See Cowley's praise of it, and the note on the passage, *Plantarum Lib. 4*. The French are perfectly *aimable* with theirs:—they call it *Pensee*, a Thought, from which comes our word Pansy:—

“ There's rosemary,” says poor Ophelia; “ that's for remembrance;—pray you, love, remember;—and there is pansies,—that's for thoughts.” Drayton, in his world of luxuries, ‘The Muse's Elysium,’ where he fairly stifles you

with sweets, has given, under this name of it, a very brilliant image of its effect in a wreath of flowers:—the nymph says

Here damask roses, white and red,
 Out of my lap first take I,
 Which still shall run along the thread;
 My chiefest flow'r this make I.
 Amongst these roses in a row,
 Next place I pinks in plenty,
 These double-daisies then for show;
 And will not this be dainty?
 The pretty Pansy then I'll tye,
Like stones some chain enchasing;
 The next to them, their near ally,
 The purple violet placing.

Nymphal 5th.

Milton, in his fine way, gives us a picture in a word,

—— the Pansy *freak'd* with jet.

It is also one of the flowers with which he strews the nuptial couch of Adam and Eve. Another of its names is *Love-in-idleness*, under which it has been again celebrated by Shakspeare, to whom we must always return, for any thing and for every thing;—his fairies make potent use of it in the *Midsummer-Nights' Dream*. The whole passage is full of such exquisite fancies, mixed with such

noble expressions and fine suggestions of sentiment, that I will indulge myself and lay it before the reader at once, that he may not interrupt himself in his chair :—

OBERON. My gentle Puck, come hither:—thou rememberest,
 Since once I sat upon a promontory,
 And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
 Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
 That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
 And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
 To hear the sea-maid's music?

PUCK.

I remember.

OBERON. That very time I saw (but thou could'st not),
 Flying betwixt the cold earth and the moon,
 Cupid all arm'd:—a certain aim he took
 At a fair vestal, throned by the west,
 And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts :
 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
 Quenched in the chaste beams of the watery moon ;
 And the imperial votaress pass'd on,
 In maiden meditation, fancy free.
 Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell :—
 It fell upon a little western flower,—
 Before, milk-white,—now purple with love's wound,—
 And maidens call it *Love-in-idleness*.
 Fetch me that flow'r,—the herb I show'd thee once :
 The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids laid,
 Will make or man or woman madly dote

Upon the next live creature that it sees.

Fetch me that herb; and be thou here again,

Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

Puck. I'll put a girdle round about the earth

In forty minutes.

Act. 2. Sc. 2.

Besides these names of *Love-in-idleness*, *Pansy*, *Heart's-ease*, and *Jump-up-and-kiss-me*, the tri-coloured violet is called also, in various country-places, the *herb Trinity*, *Three-faces-under-a-hood*, *Pink-of-my-John*, *Kiss-me-behind-the-garden-gate*, and *Cuddle-me-to-you*, which seems to have been altered by some nice apprehension into the less vivacious request of *Cull-me-to-you*.

In short, the Persians themselves have not a greater number of fond appellations for the rose, than the people of Europe for the Heart's-ease. For my part, to whom gaiety and companionship are more than ordinarily welcome on many accounts, I cannot but speak with gratitude of this little flower,—one of many with which fair and dear friends have adorned my prison-house, and the one which out-last ed all the rest.

²³ *The wines were all nectar of different smack,
To which Muskat was nothing, nor Virginis Lac,
No, nor Lachryma Christi, though clearly divine,
Nor Montepulciano, though King of all Wine.*

I do not profess to have tasted these foreign luxuries, except in the poetry of their admirers. Virginis Lac and Lachryma Christi,—*Virgin's Milk* and *Christ's Tears*,—are names given to two favourite wines by the pious Italians, whose familiarity with the objects of their devotion is as well known as it is natural. The former seems to be a white wine,—the latter is of a deep red. Muskat, or Moscadell, is so called from the odour of its grape. The two latter are mentioned among other Tuscan and Neapolitan wines by Redi in his ‘*Bacco in Toscana* ;’ but his favourite is Montepulciano, which at the conclusion and climax of the poem, is pronounced by Bacchus himself, in his hour of transport, to be the sovereign liquor :—

Onde ognun, che di Lieo
 Riverente il nome adora,
 Ascolti questo altissimo decreto,
 Che Bassareo pronunzia, e gli dia fè,
Montepulciano d' ogni Vino é il Re.

Then all that bow down to the nod,
 Of the care-killing, vintager God,
 Give ear and give faith to his edict divine,
 That *Montepulciano's the King of all Wine.*

²⁴ *I musn't forget though, that Bob, like a gander,
 Would give a "great genius,"—one Mr. Landor ;—*

Mr. Walter Savage Landor, a very worthy person, I believe, and author of an epic piece of gossiping called 'Gebir,' upon the strength of which Mr. Southey dedicated to him his 'Curse of Kehama.' There is really one good passage in Gebir about a sea-shell, and the author is one of those dealers in eccentric obscurity, who might promise to become something if they were boys; but these gentlemen have now been full grown for some time, and are equally too old and too stubborn to alter. I forbear to rake up the political allusions in a poem which nobody

knows ; and shall say as little about those in Mr. Southey's Joan of Arc, &c. but they are such as should make the Laureat and his friends cautious how they resented other people's opinions, and dealt about epithets of indignity.

*²⁵ And Walter look'd up too, and begg'd to propose
A particular friend of his,—one Mr. Rose.*

Mr. William Stewart Rose, a son of the Right Honourable George Rose, and an intelligent man, but no poet. He is author of some gentlemanly, common-place versions of old romances, which Mr. Walter Scott describes as stories “well told” in modern verse.

*²⁶ ‘For poets,’ he said, ‘who would cherish their powers,
And hop'd to be deathless, must keep to good hours.’*

This is a truism, which in a luxurious state of society, it may not be unnecessary to repeat. At such times,

poets are more in request than ever, and being personages who can enjoy as well as contribute to enjoyment, are more than ever liable to be spoilt. Never was a more vulgar mistake than that a true genius for poetry can do without study,—meaning by study, a careful research into every thing, books as well as men. A genius for poetry is nothing but a finer liability to impressions ; but what matters the liability, if we do not put ourselves in the way of the thoughts and feelings that are to impress us? We must look about for things, if we would acquire their images ; we must amass a knowledge of words, if we would explain the images to others. Study, of course, without genius will not make a poet, any more than eyes without sight will get any thing by poring over a microscope ; but on the other hand, a poet without study shall be in the situation of Pizarro at the Peruvian Court ;—with all his powers he shall not be able to write, and his common soldiers shall get the better of him in consequence. From Dryden downwards, our poets do not appear to have been very studious men, with the exception of Collins and Gray ; and the reading of Dryden himself perhaps was rather critical and particular, than general

and greedy of knowledge. Of the two others, Collins unluckily had a fortune left him, which threw him back into idleness; and Gray (with all due respect to his *Elegy*) was rather a man of great taste and reading, than an original genius*. Of the studious disposition of all our greatest poets we have complete evidence. Chaucer's eagle in the 'House of Fame' accuses him of being so desperate a student, that he takes no heed of any body, and reads till he looks stupid:—

————— No tidinges comin to the,
 Not of thy very neighbouris
 That dwellen almost at thy doris;
 Thou herist neither that ne this,
 For whan thy labour al done is,
 And hast made al thy reckininges,
 In stede of reste and of newe thinges
 Thou goest home to thine house anone,
 And al so dombe as any stone
 Thou sittest at anothis boke,
 Tyl fully dasid is thy loke.

v. 140.

* It would really be curious to ascertain, how much would be due to Gray, after a diligent inspection of his obligations to the Greek and Italian poets. I doubt whether fifty lines, if so much,—setting aside his *Long Story* and one or two little humorous pieces. He seems to have had a talent for ridicule; and must be allowed, on all hands, to have been a splendid imitator of the sublime.

Chaucer however was too true a poet not to read nature as well as books, as his writings abundantly testify, both in character and description. Milton and Spenser were both men of learning, and, what is rarer for poets, men of business; and so indeed was Chaucer. Shakspeare was neither a man of learning nor business; but not to mention, that Nature in him seems to have been oracular, and rather to have spoken by him than from him, it is clear that he read every thing that he came near, and perhaps the more because he had no learning; for learning is apt to make a man doat upon old books; and the most accomplished readers, not being so apt at a dead language as at their own, linger and brood over their favourite classic, at the expense of many a work of information.

But these names are leading me from my purpose, which was rather to remind the poet of the general than the particular use of his hours; and here I might be seduced to return to them, for Chaucer revels in morning scenery, and Milton, in one of those prose passages of his so impregnated with his poetical spirit, has expressly told us that he was an early riser.* But I must fairly put my

* Apology for Smeectymnuus.

books off the table, lest in being tempted to make a companion of the reader in all my favourite passages, I should convert these notes into what they really were not intended to be.—The summary of advice to be given to a young poet on the present occasion, is this,—that although it is a main part of his business to mingle with society, for the right apprehension of their manners and passions, and indeed for his own refreshment and enjoyment, yet he should not so mingle with it as to get hurt by its pressure, or so as to have his attention distracted by its noise or diverted by its seductions. Study should be his business, and society his relaxation, not *vice versa*; he should divide the one between the fields and his books, and the other between society in general, and that sort of friendly or domestic company, which cherishes his kindly affections, and enables him to keep in harmony with the fellow-creatures whom he is to please and to instruct; for a mere intimacy with what is called the world, not only serves to injure the finer simplicity of youth, which properly improved, becomes the noblest wisdom of age, but by leading him into not the best company and gradually fatiguing him with mankind, inclines him to care little for

pleasing, and absolutely to despair of instructing ; till at last he either looks upon all things around him with a resentful melancholy, or settles into that contemptuous indifference which is still more fatal to poetry. Dr. Young, we see, after a life of courtliness and flattery, revenged himself on his expectations by the hypochondriac poem of ‘ Night Thoughts :’—Rochester, amidst a round of idleness and debauchery, vented his disdain of human nature in sallies of ribaldry and starts of the very bitterest satire. There is undoubtedly a medium with these men of the world, in which you may find ordinary writers of satire, of comedy, and of *vers de société*,—but these are not the persons in question,—they are not the spoilable men ;—in fact, they are not poets.

The application of these remarks is intended to be as general as it appears. If Mr. Moore were living as he used to do, in the thick of the gay world, I might avail myself perhaps of the social and generous character of his writings to recommend them to him ; but he has taken wing, it seems, to a rural retirement. Indeed, it should gratify Mr. Wordsworth to see how very patriarchal most of our poets are at present, in this instance. Mr. Moore

dates from Ashbourne in Derbyshire ; Mr. Campbell from Sydenham ; Mr. Scott from Ettrick Forest ; Mr. Southey from Grasmere. Mr. Moore, it is true, is understood to have been an industrious man, at the time he was supposed to be idlest ; but the industry of a town life, and that of a due intermixture of town and country, are very different things. The former is little better than an escape from bustle, with the hum of it still ringing about your head : it is a business of snatches and make-times ; and the only hours that can be barred against interruption, are those which are stolen from health. Besides, one's virtue on these occasions is apt to recompense its pains over much, and the abstinence of the night to help itself too largely out of the day. I remember, when I was a lad, hanging loosely on society, without a prospect and almost without a hope, except that of leaving behind me the promise of something poetical, (all that I shall now perhaps be able to do,) I used to think it a fine, studious thing to sit up all night reading and writing, with a thinking silence about me, and a pot of coffee at the fire-side ; but I found out, on a sudden, that I was in the habit of rewarding my lucubrations with a proportionate

enjoyment of repose, and that I seldom got out of bed till two or three in the afternoon. For an admirer of the fields and the sunshine, this would not do;—but I have never since been able to get a proper mastery over the irregular habits which I suffered to dictate to me at that time of life, though by God's blessing I hope to achieve it before I have done.

If there is any living poet, whom from his situation in life, from his early genius, and from the complexion of his writings, a cordial observer might venture to remind of these matters, it is a young nobleman who has been lately rising into celebrity, and who, as far as the world is concerned, is now moving in the very thick of the lustre. Early his own master, and of an elevated rank, Lord Byron has had disadvantages as well as advantages, of no ordinary description. If, on the one hand, he came easily and ardently into the world, with none of the usual obstructions of fortune, and with a readiness on the part of society to admire what he should do; on the other, his entrance might have been too easy, or his expectations too ardent; enjoyments might have pressed around him too quickly to give him time for choice, and too unreservedly to leave him a sense

of respect; and at last, with a genius calculated to adorn as well as interest the circles in which he moved, he might find it difficult to escape from a round of pleasurable business, in which the self-love of others as well as his own habitual acquiescence would help to detain him. Perhaps I am assuming too much here, in more senses than one; and I confess, that I have been chiefly led into my conclusions respecting him by the general effect of rank and fortune at his time of life, and by the general turn of mind evinced in his poetry; but if I am induced to say more than I should have done to a writer of less promise, it is,—if his lordship will allow me to say so,—because I feel a more than ordinary interest in his fame, and have had some chords about me so touched by his poetry, as to speak whether I will or not.

The advice then, which I would venture to give his lordship,—and which, by the way, as an Englishman and a public writer I have other pretences for giving, in one respect,—is briefly this;—that, in the first place, he would habituate his thoughts as much as possible to the company of those recorded spirits and lofty countenances of public virtue, which elevate an Englishman's recollections,

and are the true household deities of his country,—or to descend from my epithets, that he would say a little more on politics, and appear oftener in Parliament;—secondly, that he would study society, not only in its existing brilliance or its departed grandeur, but in those middle walks of life, where he may find the most cordial sum of its happiness, as well as the soundest concentration of its intelligence;—and thirdly, that though he has done a good deal already, he would consider it as little until he could fully satisfy himself,—or if this be difficult, perhaps impossible,—that he would consider what he has done as too full of promise to warrant his resorting at any time to a common property in style, or his use of such ordinary expedients in composition, as a diligent student of our great poets will be too proud to adopt.—By following the first piece of advice, he would not only serve his country politically, but to continue speaking of him as a poet, might naturally enlarge his stock of ideas, and acquire a stronger ambition to serve it poetically;—by following the second, he might be induced to look a little more to the useful as well as the beautiful in writing, and be diverted from that tendency to view men and things on the

dark side, which generally proceeds from a want of acquaintance with the truly bright one;—lastly, by following the third, he would do justice to his real turn for original feeling and thinking, and be enabled worthily to perform what he abundantly promises.

Lord Byron will see, that by speaking thus of his promise rather than his performance, I estimate his good sense, as well as his poetry, at no vulgar standard. Had I rated him less, I might have praised him more; at least, I might have said nothing of all this to one whom I should have considered as arrived at his full growth. But though his lordship has done more in his youth than many an established writer in his full manhood, and has consequently taken his place, beyond a doubt, in the list of English Poets, yet I would no more rate what he could do at five-and-thirty by what he has done at five-and-twenty, than I would consent to have his opinion of me, as an honest and friendly critic, determined, when that period arrives, by a retrospect to unqualified commendation at present.*

* Since this note was written, his lordship has shown his mind to be in full progress by another poem called 'Lara,' which, though the least popular of his productions, appears to me to be by far the deepest and fullest.

The characteristics of Lord Byron's poetry are a general vein of melancholy,—a fondness for pithy, suggesting, and passionate modes of speech,—and an intensity of feeling, which appears to seek relief in its own violence. Every thing under his operation assumes the fierce glow of metal under the hands of the forger :—he produces it with unintermitting impatience, and turns, fashions, and dismisses it with an air of resentment. What he wants in style, and what he may clearly obtain, is a regular reliance on his own mode of speaking, without resorting, in his quieter moments, to phrases of common property :—what he wants in essential poetry, is fancy as distinguished from passion,—Spenser as distinguished from Otway ; and it may be anticipated perhaps from this, that he will always be rather on the reflecting and passionate side of poets, than on the fanciful and creative.

The Childe Harold was very striking in this respect, and evinced a singular independence and determination of thinking, with little of those fancies, original or borrowed, which are so captivating to young writers in general. The Giaour* and Bride of Abydos are two sketches

* The country gentlemen have been terribly baffled with the titles of Lord Byron's productions. Childe Harold sufficiently astounded them ;

of passion, sparkling and dignified, and abounding in felicitous instances of compression. They are not free however from common-place verses, and are disfigured besides by a number of strange exotic rhymes, consisting of absolute Turkish,—which is really unfair. Of all his lordship's productions, I confess I am still most taken with the little

Abydos, after much dispute, was luckily to be found in a dictionary; but as to the *Giaour*, he was like his namesake in Caliph Vathek, as inexplicable as he was attractive; there was no circumventing him and his four vowels. For this, in some measure, we have to thank the French, who, to suit their own convenience, make as much havoc with people's names as they do with the rest of their property. Thus, after having been used to their mode of writing the names in the Arabian Nights, and having grown in love, while we are boys, with the generosity and magnificence of the Vizier Guy-afar (Giafar), we find among the melancholy realities of our manhood that we are to call him Jaffer;—the family name of the Bedreddins is suddenly rectified into Buddir-ad-Deen; and our old, though somewhat alarming friends, Haroun al Raschid and the Cadi are discovered to be Haroon al Rusheed and the Cauzee.—See some of these alterations in Dr. Scott's new edition of that ever delightful work. One day or other we shall find our mysterious acquaintance the G-i-a-o-u-r under the plain-spoken name of the Jower. It is needless to add, that the best way of settling this matter is to write all names as nearly as possible to their original spelling. It is our business to find out the pronunciation by itself; but a name is nothing but one particular sound, by which one individual is distinguished from another, and the French might as well call Pythagoras Peter Jenkins as Peet-a-gore (Pythagore). It would have been laudable in Dr. Scott, while he was about his anti-gallican emendations, to render the word *Genie*, which has almost become naturalized, by its proper translation of *Genius*.

effusions at the end of the Childe Harold. It is here, I think, that the soul of him is to be found, and that he has most given himself up to those natural words and native impressions, which are the truest test of poetry. His lordship has evidently suffered as well as thought, and therefore we have a right to demand originality of him. Perhaps it may not have struck him, that a resolution to make the most of his past feelings and reflections for the multiplication of his poetical resources, and their subsequent use to society, is no mean or mechanical policy, and may be called the philosopher's stone of poetry. It is thus that we become masters of our destiny, and gain possession of a talisman, which shall make even the most appalling spirits wait upon our wants and administer to our usefulness.

END OF THE NOTES.

TRANSLATIONS,
&c.

THE END OF THE WORLD

18

CATULLUS'S RETURN HOME TO THE
PENINSULA OF SIRMIO.

CARMEN XXXI.



O BEST of all the scatter'd spots that lie
In sea or lake,—apple of landscape's eye,—
How gladly do I drop within thy nest,
With what a sigh of full, contented rest,

PENINSULARUM, Sirmio, insularumque
Ocelle, quascunque in liquentibus stagnis
Marique vasto fert uterque Neptunus,
Quam te libenter, quamque lætus inviso,

Scarce able to believe my journey o'er,
And that these eyes behold thee safe once more !
Oh where's the luxury like a loosen'd heart,
When the mind, breathing, lays its load apart,—
When we come home again, tir'd out, and spread
The greedy limbs o'er all the wish'd-for bed !
This, this alone is worth an age of toil.
Hail, lovely Sirmio ! Hail, paternal soil !
Joy, my bright waters, joy ; your master's come !
Laugh, every dimple on the cheek of home !

Vix mî ipse credens Thyniam atque Bithynos
Liquisse campos, et videre te in tuto !
O quid solutis est beatius curis,
Cum mens onus reponit, ac peregrino
Labore fessi venimus larem ad nostrum,
Desideratoque acquiescimus lecto !
Hoc est quod unum est pro laboribus tantis.
Salve, o venusta Sirmio, atque hero gaude !
Gaudete, vosque Lydiæ lacus undæ !
Ridete, quidquid est domi cachinnorum !

CATULLUS TO CORNIFICIUS.

CARMEN XXXVIII.



SICK, Cornificius, is thy friend,
Sick to the heart; and sees no end
Of wretched thoughts, that gath'ring fast
Threaten to wear him out at last.
And yet you never come and bring—
Though 'twere the least and easiest thing—
A comfort in that talk of thine:—
You vex me:—this, to love like mine?
Prithee, a little talk, for ease, for ease,
Full as the tears of poor Simonides.

MALE est, Cornifici, tuo Catullo,
Male est, mehercule, et laboriose,
Et magis magis in dies et horas:
Quem tu—quod minimum facillimumque est—
Qua solatus es adlocutione?
Irascor tibi:—sic meos amores?
Paulum quid lubet adlocutionis,
Mœstius lacrimis Simonideis.

ACME AND SEPTIMIUS, OR THE
ENTIRE AFFECTION.

FROM CATULLUS.—CARMEN XLV.



‘OH, Acme love!’ Septimius cried,
As on his lap he held his bride,—
‘If all my heart is not for thee,
And doats not on thee desperately,
And if it doat not more and more,
As desperate heart ne’er did before,

ACMEN Septimius, suos amores,
Tenens in gremio, ‘Mea,’ inquit, ‘Acme,
Ni te perdite amo, atque amare porro
Omnes sum assidue paratus annos,
Quantum qui pote plurimum perire,

May I be doom'd, on desert ground,

To meet the lion in his round !'*

He said ; and Love, on tiptoe near him,

Kind at last, and come to cheer him, †

Clapp'd his little hands to hear him.

* The ancients believed, that perjured persons were particularly liable to encounter wild beasts.

† It has been supposed, that the passage here, which is rather obscurely expressed in the original, at least to modern apprehensions, alludes to some difficulties, with which the lovers had met, and which had hitherto prevented their union.

Solus in Libya, Indiave tosta,

Cæsio veniam obuius leoni.'

Hoc ut dixit, Amor, sinistram ut ante,

Dextram sternuit, approbationem.

But Acme to the bending youth
Just dropping back that rosy mouth,
Kiss'd his reeling, hovering eyes,
And ' O my life, my love !' replies,
' So may our constant service be
To this one only Deity,
As with a transport doubly true
He thrills your Acme's being through !'

She said ; and Love, on tiptoe near her,
Kind at last, and come to cheer her,
Clapp'd his little hands to hear her.

At Acme, leviter caput reflectens,
Et dulcis pueri ebrios ocellos
Illo purpureo ore suaviata,
' Sic,' inquit, ' mea vita, Septimille,
Huic uno domino usque serviamus,
Ut multo mihi major acriorque
Ignis mollibus ardet in medullis.

Hoc ut dixit, Amor sinistram ut ante,
Dextram sternuit approbationem.

Favour'd thus by heav'n above,
Their lives are one return of love ;
For he, poor fellow, so possess'd,
Is richer than with East and West,—
And she, in her enamour'd boy,
Finds all that she can frame of joy.

Now who has seen, in Love's subjection,
Two more blest in their connection,
Or a more entire affection ?

Nunc ab auspicio bono profecti,
Mutuis animis amant, amantur.
Unam Septimius misellus Acmen
Mavolt quam Syrias Britanniasque ;
Uno in Septimio fidelis Acme
Facit delicias libidinesque.

Quis ullos homines beatiores
Vidit ? Quis Venerem auspiciorem ?

HORACE TO PYRRHA.

ODE V. LIB. I.



PYRRHA, what ardent stripling now,
In one of thy embower'd retreats,
Would press thee to indulge his vow
Amidst a world of flow'rs and sweets?
For whom are bound thy tresses bright
With unconcern so exquisite?
Alas, how oft shall he bewail
His fickle stars and faithless gale,

QUIS multa gracilis te puer in rosa
Perfusus liquidis urget odoribus
Grato, Pyrrha, sub antro?
Cui flavam religas comam
Simplex munditiis? Heu, quoties fidem
Mutatosque deos flebit, et aspera

And stare with unaccustom'd eyes,
When the black winds and waters rise,
Though now the sunshine hour beguiles
His bark along thy golden smiles,
Trusting to see thee, for his play,
For ever keep smooth holiday!
Poor dazzled fools, who bask beside thee!
And trust because they never tried thee!
For me, and for my dangers past,
The grateful picture hangs at last

Nigris æquora ventis
Emirabitur insolens,
Qui nunc te fruitur credulus aurea,
Qui semper vacuam, semper amabilem
Sperat, nescius auræ
Fallacis! Miseri quibus
Intentata nites! Me tabula sacer
Votiva paries indicat uvida

Within the mighty Neptune's fane,
Who snatch'd me, dripping, from the main.

Suspendisse potenti

Vestimenta maris deo.

PART OF A CHORUS
IN
SENECA'S TRAGEDY OF THYESTES.

'Tis not wealth that makes a king,
Nor the purple's colouring,
Nor a brow that's bound with gold,
Nor gates on mighty hinges rolled.

The king is he, who void of fear,
Looks abroad with bosom clear ;

REGEM non faciunt opes,
Non vestis Tyriæ color,
Non frontis nota regiæ,
Non auro nitidæ fores.

Rex est, qui posuit metus,
Et diri mala pectoris ;

Who can tread ambition down,
Nor be sway'd by smile or frown ;
Nor for all the treasure cares,
That mine conceals, or harvest wears,
Or that golden sands deliver,
Bosom'd in a glassy river.

What shall move his placid might ?
Not the headlong thunderlight,

Quem non ambitio impotens,
Et numquam stabilis favor
Vulgi præcipitis movet.
Non quidquid fodet occidens ;
Aut unda Tagus aurea
Claro devehit alveo ;
Non quidquid Libycis terit
Fervens area messibus.

Quem non concutiet cadens
Obliqui via fulminis,

Nor the storm that rushes out
To snatch the shivering waves about,
Nor all the shapes of slaughter's trade
With forward lance or fiery blade.
Safe, with wisdom for his crown,
He looks on all things calmly down;
He welcomes fate, when fate is near,
Nor taints his dying breath with fear.

Grant that all the kings assemble,
At whose tread the Scythians tremble,—

Non Euris rapiens mare,
Aut sævo rabidus freto,
Ventosi tumor Adriæ;
Quem non lancea militis,
Non strictus domuit chalybs;
Qui tuto positus loco,
Infra se vidit omnia;
Occurritque suo libens
Fato, nec queritur mori.

Reges convenient licet,
Qui sparsos agitant Dahæ,—

Grant that in the train be they,
Whom the Red-Sea shores obey,
Where the gems and chrystal caves
Sparkle up through purple waves;
Bring with these the Caspian stout,
Who scorns to shut th' invader out,
And the daring race that tread
The rocking of the Danube's bed,
With those again, where'er they be,
Who, lapp'd in silken luxury,

Qui rubri vada litoris,
Et gemmis mare lucidum
Late sanguineum tenent ;
Aut qui Caspia fortibus
Recludunt juga Sarmatis ;
Certet, Danubii vadum
Audet qui pedes ingredi ;
Et quocunque loco jacent

Feed, to the full, their lordly will ;—
The noble mind is monarch still.

No need has he of vulgar force,
Armour, or arms, or chested horse,
Nor all the idle darts that light
From Parthian in his feigned flight,
Nor whirling rocks from engines thrown,
That come to shake old cities down.

Seres vellere nobiles ;—
Mens regnum bona possidet.

Nil ullis opus est equis,
Nil armis, et inertibus
Telis, quæ procul ingerit
Parthus, cum simulat fugas ;
Admotis nihil est opus
Urbes sternere machinis
Longe saxa rotantibus.

No:—to fear not earthly thing,
This it is that makes the king;
And all of us, whoe'er we be,
May carve us out this royalty.

Rex est, qui metuit nihil;
Hoc regnum sibi quisque dat.

BACCHUS, OR THE PIRATES.

FROM HOMER.—HYMN V.



OF Bacchus let me tell a sparkling story.—

'Twas by the sea-side, on a promontory,
As like a blooming youth he sat one day,
His dark locks ripening in the sunny ray,
And wrapt in a loose cloak of crimson bright,
Which half gave out his shoulders, broad and white,
That making up, a ship appear'd at sea,
Brushing the wine-black billows merrily,—
A Tuscan trim, and pirates were the crew ;
A fatal impulse drove them as they flew ;
For looking hard, and nodding to each other,
Concluding him, at least, some prince's brother,
They issued forth along the breezy bay,
Seiz'd him with jovial hearts, and bore away.

No sooner were they off, than gath'ring round him
They mark'd his lovely strength, and would have bound him;
When lo, instead of this, the ponderous bands
Snapp'd of themselves from off his legs and hands,
He, all the while, discovering no surprise,
But keeping, as before, his calm black eyes.

At this, the Master, struck beyond the rest,
Drew them aside, and earnestly addressed;—
'O wretched as ye are, have ye your brains,
And see this being ye would hold with chains?
Trust me, the ship will not sustain him long;
For either Jove he is, terribly strong,
Or Neptune, or the silver-shafted King,
But nothing, sure, resembling mortal thing.
Land then and set him free, lest by and by
He call the winds about him, and we die.'

He said; and thus, in bitterness of heart
The Captain answer'd,—'Wretched that *thou* art!
Truly we've much to fear,—a favouring gale,
And all things firm behind the running sail!

Stick to thy post, and leave these things to men.
I trust, my friends, before we sail again,
To touch at Ægypt, Cyprus, or the north,
And having learnt meantime our prisoner's worth,
What friends he has, and wealth to what amount,
To turn this god-send to a right account.'

He said; and hauling up the sail and mast,
Drew the tight vessel stiff before the blast;
The sailors, under arms, observe their prize,
When lo, strange doings interrupt their eyes;
For first, a fountain of sweet-smelling wine
Came gushing o'er the deck with sprightly shine,
And odours, not of earth, their senses took;
The pallid wonder spread from look to look;
And then a vine-tree over-ran the sail,
Its green arms tossing to the pranksome gale;
And then an ivy, with a flowering shoot,
Ran up the mast in rings, and kiss'd the fruit,
Which here and there the dipping vine let down;
On every oar there was a garland crown.—

But now the crew call'd out 'To shore ! To shore !'
When, leaping backward with an angry roar,
The dreadful stranger to a lion turn'd ;
His glaring eyes beneath the hatches burn'd :
Then rushing forward, he became a bear,
With fearful change bewildering their despair ;
And then again a lion, ramping high
From seat to seat, and looking horribly.
Heap'd at the stern, and scrambling all along,
The trembling wretches round the Master throng,
Who calmly stood, for he had done no wrong. }
Oh, at that minute, to be safe on land !
But now, in his own shape, the God's at hand,
And spurning first the Captain from the side,
The rest leap'd after in the plunging tide ;
For one and all, as they had done the same,
The same deserv'd ; and dolphins they became.

The God then turning to the Master, broke
In happy-making smiles, and stoutly spoke :—

‘ Be of good courage, blest companion mine ;
Bacchus am I, the roaring God of Wine ;
And well shall this day be, for thee and thine.’ }

And so, all reverence and all joy to thee,
Son of the sparkle-smiling Semele !
Must never bard forget thee in his song,
Who mak’st it flow so sweetly and so strong.

SONNETS.

I.

TO THOMAS BARNES, ESQ.

WRITTEN FROM HAMPSTEAD.



DEAR BARNES, whose native taste, solid and clear,
The throng of life has strengthen'd without harm,
You know the rural feeling, and the charm
That stillness has for a world-fretted ear :—
'Tis now deep working all about me here
With thousand tiny hushings, like the swarm
Of atom bees, or fairies in alarm,
Or noise of numerous bliss from distant sphere.

This charm our evening hours duly restore,—
Nought heard through all our little, lull'd abode,
Save the crisp fire, or leaf of book turn'd o'er,
Or watch-dog, or the ring of frosty road.
Wants there no other sound then?—Yes, one more,—
The voice of friendly visiting, long owed.

II.

TO HAMPSTEAD.



SWEET upland, to whose walks with fond repair
Out of thy western slope I took my rise
Day after day, and on these feverish eyes
Met the moist fingers of the bathing air,—
If health, unearned of thee, I may not share,
Keep it, I pray thee, where my memory lies,
In thy green lanes, brown dells, and breezy skies,
Till I return, and find thee doubly fair.

Wait then my coming, on that lightsome land,
Health, and the Joy that out of nature springs,
And Freedom's air-blown locks;—but stay with me,
Friendship, frank entering with the cordial hand,
And Honour, and the Muse with growing wings,
And Love Domestic, smiling equably.

Surrey Jail, Aug. 27, 1813.

III.

TO THE SAME.



THEY tell me, when my tongue grows warm on thee,
Dear gentle hill, with tresses green and bright,
That thou art wanting in the finishing sight
Sweetest of all for summer eye to see ;—
That whatsoe'er thy charm of spire and tree,
Of dell wrapped in, or airy-viewing height,
No water looks from out thy face with light,
Or waits upon thy walks refreshfully.

It may be so,—casual though pond or brook :—
Yet not to me, so full of all that's fair,
Though fruit-embowered, with fingering sun between,
Were the divinest fount in Fancy's nook,
In which the Nymphs sit tying up their hair,
Their white backs glistening through the myrtles
green.

IV.
TO THE SAME.



WINTER has reached thee once again at last ;
And now the rambler, whom thy groves yet please,
Feels on his house-warm lips the thin air freeze ;
While in his shrugging neck the resolute blast
Comes edging ; and the leaves, in heaps down cast,
He shuffles with his hastening foot, and sees
The cold sky whitening through the wiry trees,
And sighs to think his loitering noons have passed.

And do I love thee less to paint thee so ?
No : this the season is of beauty still
Doubled at heart,—of smoke with whirling glee
Uptumbling ever from the blaze below,—
And home remembered most,—and oh, loved hill,
The second, and the last, away from thee !

V.

TO T. M. ALSAGER, ESQ.

WITH THE AUTHOR'S MINIATURE, ON LEAVING PRISON.



SOME grateful trifle let me leave with you,
Dear ALSAGER, whose knock at evening fall,
And interchange of books, and kindness all,
Fresh neighbourhood about my prison threw,
And buds of solace that to friendship grew :—
Myself it is, who if your study wall
Has room, would find a nestling corner small,
To catch, at times, a cordial glance or two.

May peace be still found there, and evening leisure,
And that which gives a room both eye and heart,
The clear, warm fire, that clicks along the coal;
And never harsher sound, than the fine pleasure
Of letter'd friend, or music's mingling art,
That fetches out in smiles the mutual soul.

VI.
TO HAMPSTEAD.



THE baffled spell, that bound me, is undone ;
And I have breath'd once more beneath thy sky,
Lovely-brow'd Hampstead, and my sight have run
O'er and about thee, and had scarce drawn nigh,
When I beheld, in momentary sun,
One of thy hills gleam bright and bosomy,
Just like that orb of orbs, a human one,
Let forth by chance upon a lover's eye.

Forgive me then, that not before I spoke ;
Since all the comforts, miss'd in close distress,
With airy nod came up from every part
O'er-smiling speech ; and so I gazed and took
A long, deep draught of silent freshfulness,
Ample, and gushing round my fevered heart.

May, 1815.

VII.

TO THE SAME.



As one who, after long and far-spent years,
Comes on his mistress in an hour of sleep,
And half surprised that he can silence keep,
Stands smiling o'er her through a flash of tears,
To see how sweet and self-same she appears ;
Till at his touch, with little moving creep
Of joy, she wakes from out her calmness deep,
And then his heart finds voice, and dances round her ears ;

So I, first coming on my haunts again,
In pause and stillness of the early prime,
Stood thinking of the past and present time,
With earnest eyesight, scarcely cross'd with pain ;
Till the fresh moving leaves, and startling birds,
Loosen'd my long-suspended breath in words.

POLITICS AND POETICS;

OR, THE

DESPERATE SITUATION OF A JOURNALIST UNHAPPILY
SMITTEN WITH THE LOVE OF RHYME.*



AGAIN I stop,—again the toil refuse!
Away, for pity's sake, distracting Muse;
Nor thus come smiling with thy bridal tricks
Between my studious face and politics.
Is it for thee to mock the frowns of fate?
Look round, look round, and mark my desperate state:

* These lines were omitted in the first edition, on account of the general indifference of the versification; but as they have been thought to resemble that mixture of fancy and familiarity, which the public have approved in the 'Feast of the Poets,' and as they involve also the anticipation of an event in the writer's life, which afterwards took place, and which he can look back upon, thank Heaven, without blushing for the manner in which he anticipated it, they are here for the greater part reprinted.

Cannot thy gifted eyes a sight behold,
That might have quelled the Lesbian bard of old,
And made the blood of Dante's self run cold?

Lo, first, this table spread with fearful books,
In which whoe'er can help it never looks,—
Letters to Lords, Remarks, Reflections, Hints,
Lives, snatch'd a moment from the public prints,—
Pamphlets to prove, on pain of our undoing,
That rags are wealth, and reformation ruin,
Journals, and briefs, and bills, and laws of libel,
And bloated and blood-red, the placeman's annual Bible.

Scarce from the load, as from a heap of lead,
My poor old Homer shows his living head;
Milton, in sullen darkness, yields to fate,
And Tasso groans beneath the courtly weight;
Horace alone (the rogue!) his doom has miss'd,
And lies at ease upon the Pension List.

Round these, in tall imaginary chairs,
Imps ever grinning, sit my daily cares,—

Distastes, delays, dislikings to begin,
Gnawings of pen, and kneadings of the chin.
Here the Blue Dæmon keeps his constant stir,
Who makes a man his own barometer ;
There Nightmare, horrid mass ! unfeatured heap !
Prépares to seize me if I fall asleep ;
And there, with hands that grasp one's very soul,
Frowns Head-ache, scalper of the studious poll,—
Head-ache, who lurks at noon about the courts,
And whets his tomahawk on East's Reports.

Chief of this social game, behind me stands,
Pale, peevish, periwigg'd, with itching hands,
A goblin double-tail'd, and cloak'd in black,
Who, while I'm gravely thinking, bites my back.
Around his head flits many a harpy shape,
With jaws of parchment and long hairs of tape,
Threatening to pounce, and turn whate'er I write
With their own venom into foul despite.
Let me but name the court, they swear, and curse,
And din me with hard names ; and what is worse,
'Tis now three times that I have miss'd my purse.



No wonder poor Torquato went distracted,
On whose gall'd senses just such pranks were acted,
When the small tyrant,—God knows on what ground,—
With dungeons and with doctors hemm'd him round.*

* See Black's *Life of Torquato Tasso*, which, if it does not evince a mature judgment in point of style, is written at once with great accuracy of investigation and enthusiasm of sympathy. Mr. Black, in opposition to Milton's, Seracci's, and indeed the general opinion, thinks that the misfortunes experienced by this illustrious poet at the court of Ferrara were not owing to a passion between him and the Princess Leonora; and perhaps the belief in it has been little more than a guess, not entirely destitute of internal evidence, and certainly not unfounded either in human nature, in the character of the poet himself, or in the general destiny of princesses. The reasons why Tasso might not talk more explicitly to the world on such a subject, are obvious. I believe it was not ascertained till lately, that the horrible persecution experienced by Baron Trenk from Frederick the Second of Prussia, was owing to an early attachment with which he had inspired the king's sister Amelia, and which that noble-minded and unfortunate princess carried with her to the grave. The interview that took place between the Baron and his royal Mistress in their old age, after never having seen each other since their youth, is one of the most affecting incidents in the history of the human heart. Leonora, like the Princess Amelia, died unmarried;—but, at all events, whether she had or had not any thing to do with the poet's destiny, one can never think without indignation of the state to which he was reduced by her brother the Duke of Ferrara, who, whatever was the cause of his dislike, chose to regard his morbid sensibility as madness, and not only locked him up, but drenched him with nauseous medicines. It is truly humiliating to hear the great poet, in spite

Last, but not least, (methinks I see him now !)
With stare expectant, and a ragged brow,
Comes the foul fiend, who,—let it rain or shine,
Let it be clear or cloudy, foul or fine,
Or freezing, thawing, drizzling, hailing, snowing,
Or mild, or warm, or hot, or bleak and blowing,
Or damp, or dry, or dull, or sharp, or sloppy,
Is sure to come,—the Devil who comes for copy !

of his natural highmindedness, petitioning to be relieved from his inordinate quantity of physic, or promising, in the event of obtaining a small indulgence, to take it more patiently. One of the miseries with which persecution and a diseased fancy conspired to torment him during his confinement in Saint Anne's Hospital, was an idea that he was haunted by a mischievous little goblin, who tumbled his papers about, stole his money, and deranged his contemplations. The following wild and simple touch of pathos is supposed to have been written by him during these afflictions:—

Tu, che ne vai in Pindo,
Ivi pende mia cetra ad un cipresso,
Salutala in mio nome, e dille poi,
Ch'io son dagli anni, e da fortuna oppresso.

Thou, who to Pindus tak'st thy way,
Where my harp hangs upon a cypress tree,
Salute it in my name, and say,
That I am old, and full of misery.

But see! e'en now the Muse's charm prevails;
The shapes are moved; the stricken circle fails;
With backward grins of malice they retire,
Scared by her seraph looks, and smiles of fire:
That instant as the hindmost shuts the door,
The bursting sunshine smites the window'd floor;
Bursts too, on every side, the sparkling sound
Of birds abroad,—the elastic spirits bound,
And the fresh mirth of morning breathes around:
Away, ye clouds!—dull politics, give place!—
Off, cares, and wants, and threats, and all the race
Of foes to freedom, and to laurelled leisure!
To day is for the Muse—and dancing Pleasure!

Oh for a seat in some poetic nook,
Just hid with trees, and sparkling with a brook,
Where through the quivering boughs the sun-beams shoot
Their arrowy diamonds upon flower and fruit,
While stealing airs come fuming o'er the stream,
And lull the fancy to a waking dream!
There shouldst thou come, O first of my desires,
What time the noon had spent its fiercer fires,

And all the bower, with chequer'd shadows strown,
Glow'd with a mellow twilight of its own ;
There shouldst thou come, and there sometimes with thee
Might deign repair the staid Philosophy,
To taste thy freshening brook, and trim thy groves,
And tell us what good task true glory loves.

I see it now ! I pierce the fairy glade,
And feel the enclosing influence of the shade :—
A thousand forms, that sport on summer eves,
Glance through the light, and whisper in the leaves,
While every bough seems nodding with a sprite,
And every air seems hushing the delight,
And the calm bliss, fix'd on itself a while,
Dimples the unconscious lips into a smile.

Anon strange music breathes ;—the fairies show
Their pranksome crowd ; and in grave order go
Beside the water, singing, small and clear,
New harmonies unknown to mortal ear,
Caught upon moonlight nights from some nigh-wander-
ing sphere.

I turn to thee, and listen with fix'd eyes,
And feel my spirits mount on winged ecstasies.

In vain.—For now with looks that doubly burn,
Shamed of their late defeat, my foes return.
They know their foil is short ;—and shorter still,
The bliss that waits upon the Muse's will.
Back to their seats they rush, and reassume
Their ghastly rights, and sadden all the room.
O'er ears and brain the bursting wrath descends,
Cabals, mis-statements, noise of private ends,
Doubts, hazards, crosses, cloud-compelling vapours,
With dire necessity to read the papers,
Judicial slaps that would have stung Saint Paul,
Costs, pityings, warnings, wits,—and worse than all,
(Oh for a dose of Thelwall or of poppy !)
The fiend, the punctual fiend, that bawls for copy !
Full in the midst, like that Gorgonian spell,
Whose ravening features glared collected hell,
The well-wigg'd pest his curling horror shakes,
And a *fourth* snap of threatening vengeance takes !
At that dread sight, the Muse at last turns pale,
Freedom and Fiction's self no more avail,
And lo, my Bower of Bliss is turn'd into a jail !

What then ? What then ? my better genius cries :—
Scandals and jails !—All these you may despise.

The enduring soul, that to keep others free
Dares to give up its darling liberty,
Lives wheresoe'er its countrymen applaud,
And in their great enlargement walks abroad :
But toils alone, and struggles every hour
Against the insatiate, gold-flush'd Lust of Power,
Can keep the fainting Virtue of thy land
From the rank slaves, that gather round his hand.
Be poor in purse, and law will soon undo thee ;
Be poor in soul, and self-contempt will rue thee.

I yield, I yield.—Once more I turn to you,
Harsh politics, and once more bid adieu
To the soft dreaming of the Muse's bowers,
Their sun-streak'd fruits, and fairy-painted flowers.
Farewell, for gentler times, ye laurell'd shades !
Farewell, ye sparkling brooks, and haunted glades,
Where the trim shapes, that bathe in moonlight eves,
Glance through the light, and whisper in the leaves,
While every bough seems nodding with a sprite,
And every air seems hushing the delight.
Farewell, farewell, dear Muse, and all thy pleasure !
He conquers ease, who would be crown'd with leisure.

SONG.

(TO THE AIR OF "THE DE'IL CAME FIDDLING THROUGH THE TOWN.")



OH, one that I know is a knavish lass,
Though she looks so sweet and simple ;
Her eyes there are none can safely pass,
And it's wrong to trust her dimple.
So taking the jade was by nature made,
So finish'd in all fine thieving,
She'll e'en look away what you wanted to say,
And smile you out of your grieving.

To see her, for instance, go down a dance,
You'd think you sat securely,
For there's nothing about her of forward France,
And nothing done over demurely ;
But lord ! she goes with so blithe a repose,
And comes so shapely about you,
That ere you're aware, with a glance and an air,
She whisks your heart from out you.

NATIONAL SONG.



HAIL, England, dear England, true Queen of the West,
With thy fair swelling bosom and ever-green vest,
How nobly thou sitt'st in thine own steady light,
On the left of thee Freedom, and Truth on the right,
While the clouds, at thy smile, break apart, and turn
bright!

The Muses, full voiced, half encircle the seat,
And Ocean comes kissing thy princely white feet.

All hail! all hail!

All hail to the beauty, immortal and free,
The only true goddess that rose from the sea.

Warm-hearted, high-thoughted, what union is thine
Of gentle affections and genius divine!

Thy sons are true men, fit to battle with care;
Thy daughters true women, home-loving and fair,
With figures unequall'd, and blushes as rare:

E'en the ground takes a virtue, that's trodden by thee,
And the slave, that but touches it, starts, and is free.

All hail ! all hail !

All hail, Queen of Queens, there's no monarch beside,
But in ruling as thou dost, would double his pride.

A THOUGHT ON MUSIC.

SUGGESTED BY A PRIVATE CONCERT, MAY 13, 1815.



To sit with downward listening, and cross'd knee,
Half conscious, half unconscious, of the throng
Of fellow-ears, and hear the well-met skill
Of fine musicians,—the glib ivory
Twinkling with numerous prevalence,—the snatch
Of brief and birdy flute, that leaps apart,—
Giddy violins, that do whate'er they please,—
And sobering all with circling manliness,
The bass, uprolling deep and voluble ;—
Well may the sickliest thought, that keeps its home
In a sad heart, give gentle way for once,
And quitting its pain-anchor'd hold, put forth
On that sweet sea of many-billow'd sound,
Floating and floating in a dreamy lapse,
Like a half-sleeper in a summer boat,
Till heaven seems near, and angels travelling by.

For not the notes alone, or new-found air,
Or structure of elaborate harmonies,
With steps that to the waiting treble climb,
Suffice a true-touch'd ear. To that will come
Out of the very vagueness of the joy
A shaping and a sense of things beyond us,
Great things and voices great : nor will it reckon
Sounds, that so wake up the fond-hearted air,
To be the unmeaning raptures they are held,
Or mere suggestions of our human feeling,
Sorrow, or mirth, or triumph. Infinite things
There are, both small and great, whose worth were lost
On us alone,—the flies with lavish plumes,—
The starry-showering snow,—the tints and shapes
That hide about the flowers,—gigantic trees,
That crowd for miles up mountain solitudes,
As on the steps of some great natural temple,
To view the godlike sun :—nor have the clouds
Only one face, but on the side of heaven
Keep ever gorgeous beds of golden light.

Part then alone we hear, as part we see :
And in this music, lovely things of air

May find a sympathy of heart or tongue,
Which shook perhaps the master, when he wrote,
With what he knew not,—meanings exquisite,—
Thrillings, that have their answering chords in heaven,—
Perhaps a language well-tuned hearts shall know
In that blest air, and thus in pipe and string
Left by angelic mouths to lure us thither.

THE END.

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